



ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Exploring EAP Teacher Development in a Transnational Education Context: Beliefs and Practices of EAP Teachers

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ABSTRACT

This small-scale action research project focuses on the teaching practices of three EAP teachers delivering a pre-session course to pre-MSc students going on to study STEM subjects at a Chinese partnership TNE institution located in Eastern China. The course was created by the home UK higher education institution, but the teachers were recruited by the Chinese partnership institution. However, their experience and knowledge of teaching were unfamiliar to the home UK institution pre-session course developers. Consequently, this project seeks to understand what features of EAP teaching these participants report and display in their practice, while identifying areas to guide further development for teachers delivering pre-session courses in this TNE context. Through lesson observations, semi-structured interviews and respondent checking methods, the data revealed that all participants showed an understanding of the differences between General English and EAP, appreciating the need to support students in developing key academic skills. However, the data highlighted mismatches between beliefs and practice along with gaps in practice, relating to awareness of lesson aims; scaffolding tasks effectively so these aims could be met; and greater awareness of transferable academic skills to students' subject disciplines. These areas will guide interventions to support ongoing EAP teaching development in this TNE context.

KEYWORDS:

EAP, Transnational Education, Teacher Development, China



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1. Introduction

Transnational Education (TNE) joint venture partnerships have become a cornerstone of UK universities' internationalisation agendas, offering diverse study opportunities while broadening their international research and teaching influences (International Higher Education Commission, 2023). China, being a key receiving destination of these partnerships, currently hosts 239 UK-China joint programmes or institutes (British Council, 2026) teaching over 80,000 students across Undergraduate (UG) and Postgraduate (PG) degree programmes (British Council, 2024).

As these programmes are taught in English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI), students need to obtain a level of language proficiency to meet entrance requirements to study their chosen degree programmes (Huang, 2008). Coupled with this language requirement is the need for students to develop the academic skills to acquire an 'academic socialisation' (Lea and Street, 1998) into their subject areas to enable them to succeed on their degree programmes. These skills and language are often taught through English for Academic Purposes (EAP) methodology, on in-sessional and or pre-sessional courses or modules.

EAP courses or modules can be taught by both local Chinese staff from within the receiving Chinese partnership university or by teachers sent by the home UK Higher Education Institution (HEI) to China. For Chinese teachers delivering EAP courses, the methodologies of EAP might be unfamiliar (Kohnke et al., 2022), professional development opportunities to understand and develop their EAP practice might be rare (Zhou & Delogu, 2026), and these staff may be more accustomed to teaching General English (GE) syllabi through the College English (CE) system and the accompanying College English Test (CET), which are well established within Chinese HEIs (Cheng, 2016). These factors seem to be particularly evident within the TNE context in which the researcher is working as teacher and course coordinator.

As TNE lead coordinator within my department, I was tasked with creating an 8-week pre-sessional EAP course for pre-MSc students progressing onto degrees in electronic and robotics engineering and AI-related fields. The pre-sessional course was delivered by language teachers (all Chinese nationals) from the Chinese receiving partnership institution in July 2025. Due to this expansion in EAP teaching and the need for the awarding UK home institution to remain involved but unable to send staff to deliver the course, it is thus essential to understand more about the EAP and language teaching knowledge and practices of these teachers and to devise appropriate ongoing support.

This action research project will look at the beliefs and practices of some teachers working on this pre-sessional course, with the results providing rationale or insights into the development of teacher training initiatives and interventions that will engage staff in teaching methodologies of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Any initiatives arising from this research will enable the receiving Chinese university staff to begin supporting their students' transition into their academic communities of practice, learning about and practising necessary research and academic communication skills in their discipline.

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As an action research project, this study will involve an inevitable cyclical process of enquiry and development change in the researcher's own professional practice. (Richards, 2003). As convenor and course developer of the pre-session course this research focuses on, I am seeking the most effective ways of supporting members of staff new to EAP, working on this course. Any suggestions for interventions that arise from the discussion of this project's data will in turn be evaluated and refined as part of the 'cyclical or spiral' (Atkins & Wallace, 2012, p. 134) process of this research tradition.

The Research Questions are as follows:

RQ1: What pedagogical features of EAP teaching are evident in participants' stated beliefs and observed classroom practices?

RQ2: To what extent do discrepancies between EAP teachers' stated beliefs and observed practices, when compared with established best practices in EAP pedagogy, reveal areas for targeted professional development?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Transnational Education and English Medium of Instruction Development

Encouraged by state-sponsored initiatives and educational policy dictates, English Medium of Instruction programmes have expanded significantly in Chinese HEIs over the last 20 years (Cai, 2021). Within this remit of EMI, Transnational Educational partnerships have also developed. Described as higher education services in China, organised and delivered by both Chinese and Western HEIs, targeting mostly Chinese national students (McKinley et al., 2021), TNE partnerships can come in different forms, such as joint venture universities, affiliated colleges or (most commonly) as joint institutes where degree programmes from the UK or other 'home' HEI are taught to students in China.

Students at Joint Institutes pursue the same UK degree that would be undertaken if a student had chosen to study at the home (UK) institution. Such partnerships operate in different capacities allowing students different enrolment options, such as 2+2, 4+0 and other permutations of degree study. In essence, students can study all, or part, of their degree in their country without incurring costs or complications of travelling to the UK or other international destinations. Moreover, the tendency of students to undertake 4+0 UG degrees (4 years in China and 0 in the UK) is becoming more common within Chinese and UK TNE partnerships due to domestic economic pressures and challenges obtaining required visas (Shi & Ramos, 2023).

The Joint Institute in which this research project is based follows a 4+0-degree programme structure for UG students and a 2+0 PG degree programme, with students studying degrees in Engineering, Robotics and AI-related fields solely in China. However, there is a need to utilise local Chinese English teaching staff to support the language and skills development for students enrolled on these degrees. Within this resourcing, comes the need to understand more about the language teaching practices of such teachers in China and how EAP programmes might be taught.

2.2 EAP and General English Language Teaching in China

With the growth of EMI institutions in China, educational policy makers have placed increased importance on developing students' language proficiency to support their academic and communicative needs while studying at university (Galloway & Bond 2026). Although there is some discussion within language teaching circles in China about how best to support students' language and skills development at University (Cheng, 2016), from the early 2000s, EAP programmes have figured prominently within some Chinese HEIs (Liao et al, 2025). Fudan University in the greater Shanghai area is one example, which has devised EAP courses to support students while studying science, business and engineering subjects (Cai, 2021). Moreover, Tsinghua University (Beijing) teaches EAP programmes as part of its degrees, looking at specific subskills of reading, listening, speaking and writing at different levels of proficiency (Zhang et al., 2011, as cited in Gao & Bartlett, 2014). Other examples of EAP teaching that adopt imported or more westernised notions of EAP delivery can be seen at Nottingham Ningbo (UNNC) and Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (Suzhou). However, these branch campus partnerships, or legal entities, might operate a different approach to EAP course teaching delivery than other TNE partnership configurations due to a focused recruitment of EAP teachers from outside of China (Kohnke et al., 2022).

When EMI Universities or TNE partnerships are established, and language proficiency or skills courses are needed for the student body, the partnership university in China may use local staff to teach on such courses (Zhou & Delogu, 2026). However, many local (Chinese national) teachers working at these HE institutions tend to have limited experience of EAP, with most of their experience teaching on College English programmes or preparing students for the College English Test (CET) (Kohnke et al., 2022)

College English (CE) teaching resembles what might be described as General English Language teaching in terms of syllabus and content with an onus on general mastery of proficiency in the four skill areas (Cheng, 2016). It is often taught during students' undergraduate degrees to support their communicative proficiency in English, while also focusing on socio-cultural topics. The accompanying CET tests (at CET 4 and CET 6 levels) are weighted heavily in favour of reading and multiple-choice style questioning of discrete point grammar and vocabulary items, which has a washback on teaching during CE courses (Liao et al., 2025). In essence, students are taught to pass these tests at the expense of developing more comprehensive proficiency in the four skills which can support their academic studies. Moreover, the CET test scores have importance beyond students' academic needs, being used to support employment and residential applications as well as providing academic esteem (Liu et al., 2018). This scenario can lead some in Chinese language teaching circles to question the use of CE teaching and its accompanying CET tests as reliable evidence that it supports students' academic needs (Gao & Bartlett, 2014) with the suggestion that a shift to EAP teaching might be more effective (Cai, 2021).

However, the departure from delivering College English programmes to EAP courses or modules is not without challenge. A long-standing nationally implemented curriculum, directed by the Chinese Ministry of Education, has resulted in entrenched views amongst language

teachers of the importance that teaching general English (within CE) has over more specific forms of English (EAP) to Chinese undergraduates (Cheng, 2016). Chinese language teachers report being more comfortable with General English programmes within the College English system, seeing the grading of course material as more suitable to students displaying a range of language levels (Kohnke et al., 2022), while being taught through everyday topics (Cai, 2021). Moreover, when teachers accustomed to College English teaching were faced with transitioning to EAP teaching at Chinese HEIs, they report a lack of structured training or workplace incentives to develop their knowledge and practice in the discipline (Cheng, 2016; Farrell & Yang, 2017). Teachers may feel they are unqualified to teach subject matter that they perceive requires specific content knowledge of the subjects their students are studying (Gao & Bartlett, 2014). Coupled with excessive teaching loads, and with little promise of EAP training raising their perceived lower professional status within their institution (Cai, 2021; Kohnke et al., 2022), teachers may not always view EAP teaching training initiatives positively.

Transitioning from teaching general English to EAP also presents complications for teachers based in the UK. Typically, EAP teachers have been those that have come from General English language teaching backgrounds, being initiated in the Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) industry through teaching experience and obtaining qualifications such as Cambridge Certifications (CELTA, DELTA) or Trinity College equivalents (Ding & Campion, 2016). If further transitional training is carried out by teachers into EAP pedagogies, it is often in-house as part of pre-sessional course inductions or attached as modules to more formalised certifications or degrees (Campion, 2016). These certifications and experiences are often taken as evidence by the employing HEIs that the teacher will have the ability and potential to learn what EAP is and how it can be taught in a Higher Education setting or as part of a pre-sessional course (Ding & Campion, 2016). However, these certifications and experience are not always sufficient, and teachers from these backgrounds may still require guidance in making links between what is suitable in their previous teaching backgrounds and how it might apply to a new EAP one (Alexander, 2007).

2.3 Notions of General English Teaching

While considering how best to understand teachers' knowledge of the academic practice aspects of EAP, studies like this one need to first unpack notions of how GE is taught in Chinese HEIs. Other studies that look at GE language teachers transitioning to EAP teaching contexts do not highlight, in any depth, what is understood by practitioners about how general English language is taught; the assumption is that EFL and General English are accepted notions across all language teaching contexts (Cai, 2021; Cheng, 2016; Kohnke et al., 2022; Runchman et al., 2023). As EAP teaching approaches and methodology place importance on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Bruce, 2015; Motteram & Dawson, 2025), clarity is needed to ascertain how researchers and teachers understand GE and how communicative competency might be taught within related EAP programmes. For instance, questions could be asked about whether teachers subscribe to the ideas that students must participate orally in the target language to develop communicative competence (Littlewood, 2007); and whether each student has a maximum share of this participation (Holliday, 1997, p. 411), amongst others.

Some studies reveal that Chinese teachers' views of what CLT means vary. In Li's study looking into what CLT is, a participant mentioned that they thought CLT approaches do not involve any grammar teaching and solely relate to teaching conversational English (Li, 2003). Moreover, other studies looked at ways that teachers in China still maintain their own values and approaches to teaching English even though they were asked to adopt ones more in sync with CLT or GE as understood from within British, Australian and North American teaching contexts (Zheng & Adamson, 2003). This includes examples such as being a knowledge transmitter, supporter of memorization techniques and top-down explanations. However, in this study, one participant tried to elicit creative responses, drawing on his students' personal experiences while also maintaining his more accustomed teacher-centred approaches (Zheng & Adamson, 2003). This encouragement of teaching English within the 'informal order' (Widdowson, 1987, p. 84) of education settings respects the idea of authoritative teacher as one of 'knower' and 'activity organiser' (Tudor, 1993, p. 24) in tandem, something that might not comfortably fit within the descriptions of CLT and GE.

The suggestion arising here is not that a teacher's prior experiences need to be expunged at the expense of westernised notions of CLT, as there may be scope to adapt and reinvent these notions to help suit the new teaching contexts in which these teachers find themselves. This is likely to be beneficial to both teachers and their students as their views and approaches can be recast with greater relevance to their specific conditions of teaching (Widdowson, 1989).

Through informal conversations with teachers from the Chinese partnership who were working on this pre-session course, it became apparent to me that CET teaching comprised a core part of their language teaching experience and few had detailed working knowledge or experience of EAP. However, they seemed enthusiastic to develop their craft in EAP, viewing it as important in their career trajectories, despite being potentially challenging. Therefore, having evidence-based research to support suitable professional development opportunities was key to supporting these teachers, who would likely be working on this pre-session course for the foreseeable future.

3. Methodology

3.1 Teacher Cognition in Language Research

Teacher cognition is defined as "pre- or in-service teachers' self-reflections; beliefs and knowledge about teaching, students, content, and awareness of problem" (Kagan, 1990, p. 419). This research tradition holds that teachers play an important role in shaping classroom events and processes and as such, evidence of their knowledge and practice can reveal how learning is taking place for the students being taught (Borg, 2015). In turn, it might highlight alignments or mismatches between belief and practice, which teacher educators, like me, may use as meaningful points in which to base further discussions and reflections with the teachers on this course (Basturkmen, 2012, p. 291).

The research methods that accompany this tradition have also been utilised by other researchers looking at EAP teacher cognition. Of these, some [research methods] undertake a qualitative analysis of teachers' views of their own practices through interviews and questionnaires, using respondents' answers as the primary data set on which to analyse and draw conclusions (Alexander, 2012; Campion, 2016; Fitzpatrick et al., 2022). Moreover, in cases where researchers have looked at EAP teacher beliefs specifically in a Chinese context (Kohnke et al., 2022; Runchman et al., 2023;), the method of data collection is based on interview or questionnaire eliciting participant views and knowledge of their teaching.

There are few studies which take multi-methods approaches to gathering data on teachers' views while comparing these to observed practices, especially relating to EAP teachers' beliefs and practices in a Chinese TNE based context. Adopting both interview and classroom observations to gather data will be of significance to this action research project as it can be challenging to understand teachers' language pedagogies based on accounts of themselves, without asking them to reflect on actual instances of their practice (Breen et al., 2001). Researchers of teacher cognition need to understand 'teachers' professional actions, not what or how they think in isolation of what they do' (Borg, 2015, p. 105) to best approach supporting their efforts in understanding more about what EAP teaching means and how to deliver it in their contexts.

This gap in the research around EAP cognition in teachers working in a TNE provision gives credence to this action research project. It focuses on Chinese EAP teachers' views on their teaching practice and how these correspond to their practices delivering lessons on a pre-session course at a receiving Chinese partner TNE university.

3.2 8-Week Pre-session Course

The 2025 pre-session course was framed around specific transferable skills and topics that are relevant to students' postgraduate degrees in Electronic Engineering and Robotics Engineering and AI-related fields. The 78 students enrolled undertook 21 weekly contact hours of classes across an analytical syllabus, in which material is organised around larger units of language that are deconstructed and then repackaged to create a completed written genre. This choice of syllabus is suitably effective in helping meet the communicative and literacy needs of students' future academic study (Bruce, 2015). To be specific, students were writing up an IMRD report of a subject-related group project that generates data and requires analysis. For this task they bring together taught and practised material from the course lessons which helped them deconstruct and reconstruct literature reviews, methodological justifications and analysis of experimental data. Other features of the course related to developing language proficiency in all four skills to a B2 (IELTS 6) standard to meet the language requirements of the UK institution's PG degree course entry.

3.3 Research Participants

The participants being investigated were three teachers (all Chinese nationals) already employed by the receiving Chinese university as English language teachers. The participants have varying lengths of EAP teaching and general English language teaching experience, but all

three shared similarities in experience of teaching College English at their institution. None of the participants had studied language teaching pedagogies outside of China, and all three wanted to develop their EAP teaching skills, seeing it as important in their career trajectories (see table 1 for summary).

Participant	Teaching Experience	Qualifications
P1	• 10 Years' experience, mostly CE at Chinese partnership Uni, and CET exam classes • Taught 5-week pre-session course at Chinese partnership University in 2024	• BA and MA in Linguistics from Chinese University. • IELTS equivalent score of 8
P2	• 15 years of CE teaching • Taught CET test preparation classes • 2 years teaching EAP on foundation year module at Chinese partnership University • Like P1, taught 5-week pre-session course in 2024	• PG English teaching qualification from Chinese University. • IELTS equivalent score of 8
P3	• 17 years' teaching GE within CE programme • Some convening/coordinating experience • Taught CET test preparation classes • 5 years teaching EAP on foundation year module (same as P2) • Like P1 and P2, taught 5 week pre-session in 2024	• PG English language teaching qualification from Chinese University • IELTS equivalent score of 8

Table 1: Summary of Participants' Teaching Experience and Qualifications

Each participant was observed once during the first week of the pre-session in a 90–110-minute lesson of their choosing. Following that lesson, a 1-hour semi-structured interview took place to elicit participants' views and approaches to teaching English and EAP, while discussing features from their observed lesson.

3.4 Ethical Procedure

Following ethical protocol outlined by my school's research ethics committee, I received approval to carry out this project. As part of this process, I acted on feedback that highlighted possible power dynamics between me and the participants. As I was both convenor and researcher this relationship might create unreliable data produced by participants and place

undue stress on them during the pre-session course. To address this issue, I clearly explained my research project's aims in a pre-course induction, while reassuring teachers that their anonymity would be protected and observations within the research were not evaluative nor performance-related during their contracted period of teaching. Instead, the observations would only be used to gather data to create a clearer picture of their approaches to teaching EAP-related courses.

3.5 Methods of Data Collection

3.5.1 Lesson Observations

My lesson observations can be described as 'unstructured' (Borg, 2015, p. 178), meaning I was: a non-participant observer; provided full disclosure to participants about the nature of the observations; manually recorded lesson stages; and the thematic points of observation were a mix of predetermined and open categories, leading to an eventual application of deductive and inductive coding methods (Borg, 2015, p. 178). The pre-determined categories used to focus the observations were taken from BALEAP's TEAP framework and adaptations from Cambridge CELTA's teaching evaluation criteria.

BALEAP's Teaching in EAP (TEAP) scheme uses a competency-based framework to support applicants in focusing their CPD efforts and approaches to ensure they are meeting accepted sector-wide standards in their practice. The scheme was devised and enacted in 2014 and then further developed in 2022 to meet the 'impoverished provision [...] and informal and inadequate ad hoc training' (Alexander, 2007, p. 3) that existed to support General English language teachers' transition into EAP pedagogies and teaching contexts. Prior to this teacher training intervention, little articulation existed to clarify what knowledge and practices an EAP teacher should possess to support their students effectively (Kirk & King, 2022). As a TEAP mentor and assessor I am familiar with the competency statements and, like others who were involved with the initial concept of the competency scheme, see this as a reputable benchmarking of teaching and scholarly excellence for those working in EAP (Bruce, 2015). Therefore, I decided to use some competencies (of different levels within the scheme) to guide my thematic points of observation in this project (see Figure 1)

- a) You stage and scaffold teaching of academic communication by setting up tasks effectively that enable learners to participate (AT 6: BALEAP)
 - b) You demonstrate awareness of strategies for processing and producing texts (AP3: BALEAP)
 - c) You respond flexibly to unplanned learning opportunities (AT 12: BALEAP)
 - d) You consider, anticipate and check student needs (AP6: BALEAP)
 - e) You integrate study skills & strategies explicitly into teaching (AT7: BALEAP)
 - f) Your teaching aims to develop academic and professional attributes (such as critical thinking and autonomy) (AT 5: BALEAP)
 - g) You adapt material for specific academic contexts/disciplines (AT 4: BALEAP)
 - h) Your teaching develops students' ability to navigate conventions and values of current or future educational contexts (AT 8: BALEAP)
 - i) You raise awareness of discourse features in your teaching (AT 10: BALEAP)
- You recognise the principles of effective assessment and feedback delivery (AA2: BALEAP) (BALEAP, 2022, p.17)

Figure 1: *Observational Framework Criteria: BALEAP Informed*

Some criteria from the Cambridge Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA) were also included into the research project's observational framework to ensure that GE language teaching features, still relevant to EAP teaching, were represented (Figure 2). The Cambridge CELTA course is a sector-leading month-long qualification (UK based) that helps prepare those new to English language teaching with the essential skills needed to begin a career in this industry with confidence (Cambridge English Teaching, 2024). Adopting these features gives clarity to how I interpret positive CLT approaches used in English language teaching. They are more explicit than those mentioned in the BALEAP competencies yet are equally valid in EAP teaching.

- j) You provide clear learning objectives that are aligned to tasks throughout the lesson (GE/CLT informed)
- k) You create a stress-free learning environment and situations where students are comfortable to practice using language or relevant academic skills in English (GE/CLT)
- l) You give feedback to students on their language use or formulation of ideas (GE/CLT)
- m) The content presented seems accurate and suitably motivating for students (GE/CLT)

Figure 2: *Observational Framework Criteria: General English/CLT Informed*

(Cambridge English Teaching, 2024)

3.5.2 Interviews

Following these observations, I carried out semi-structured interviews to talk about participant views on EAP teaching, the differences they notice to teaching general English based methodologies and whether they feel their approaches fit some descriptions of the competencies listed in the observation criteria. The nature of the interviews allows the researcher to elicit relevant and further information from their answers and connect to parts of their observation, which can explore the how and why of actions or decisions made by teachers to uncover participant interpretations more effectively (Turner & Meyer, 2000, as cited in Dörnyei, 2007). In turn, these research methods might reveal patterns of teaching behaviour and provide opportunities to notice mismatches between tutors' views of their practices and what they demonstrate in the classroom (see Appendix A).

3.5.3 Participant Validation

Following the lesson observation, I sent each participant my lesson observation notes and gave them the opportunity to respond to my comments about their lesson. Respondent validation can check the validity of the research methods by asking for confirmation on the accuracy of the data documented (Denscombe, 2007). Participants might be able to explain why something was happening in a lesson with suitable rationale or whether it was typical of their approaches to EAP teaching (see Appendix B), thus possibly confirming or dispelling demonstrable evidence of EAP teaching features.

3.6 Coding Data

Each lesson observation was transcribed from the notes taken in the manual notetaking procedure. Using a simple columned form, I noted timings during the lesson and descriptive observations of what the participant was doing or saying. I also made comments regarding events or instances of practice that seemed positive, interesting or unusual in their execution (see Figure 3).

Observation Notes: Participant X		
Date: 02/07/25	Time: 10:45–12:20	14 Students
Lesson Number and Topic: 8 Listening & Speaking: Engineering Influences		
Time	Observation	Comment
10:45	Lesson starts. Teacher directs students' attention to first para of handout. Handout projected onto screen for all to see. SS asked to read and find aim of lesson...	Instructions given in a way that assume students know what to do....
10:51	Teacher moves onto...	...

Figure 3: Extract of Researcher's Observation Note-taking Form

I then coded the generated data using the observational framework criteria (Figures 1 and 2) according to whether criteria were ‘evidenced’ or ‘partially evidenced’. The measure of whether the feature or action was ‘evidenced’ rested on my judgment of what could be seen or what was absent. Notes that indicated ‘partially evidenced’ features meant I was unsure if this criterion was being effectively displayed or if the teacher needed to further develop awareness of the skill or knowledge within a particular criterion (Figure 4). These coded criteria were supported with evidence and commentary taken from the observation note-taking form (Figure 3).

Participant Lesson Observation		
Observed features	Evidenced? Partially Evidenced?	Comments
l) You integrate study skills & strategies explicitly into teaching (AT7: BALEAP)	Evidenced: T asks SS to remember pre-listening skills from day before. Then instructs them to underline key words in comprehension questions. Also mentions a previous lesson where cause and effect language was taught...	The scaffolding of this task is handled well and P1 aware of the importance of pre-listening scaffolded tasks...

Figure 4: Extract of Coding from Lesson Observation

A summary was then created (Table 2) that collated criteria that were evidenced and partially evidenced. These features were then grouped into ‘demonstrable’ (evidenced) and ‘areas of improvement’ (partially evidenced) columns.

Demonstrable	Areas of Improvement
g) You stage and scaffold teaching of academic communication (AT 6: BALEAP)	a) You provide clear learning objectives that are aligned to tasks throughout the lesson (GE/CLT)
h) You demonstrate awareness of strategies for processing and producing texts (AP 3: BALEAP)	d) You give feedback to students on their language use or formation of ideas (GE/CLT)
j) You respond flexibly to unplanned learning opportunities (AT 12 BALEAP)	h) Your teaching develops students’ ability to navigate conventions and values of current and future educational contexts (AT 8: BALEAP)
l) You integrate study skills & strategies explicitly into teaching (AT 7: BALEAP)	

Table 2: Summary table of criteria being observed as demonstrable and needing improvement

Shortly after the observation, the interview was recorded and then transcribed. The coding of this data followed a similar pattern to the lesson observation, using a columned notetaking form to organise the data. However, the themes that were coded were documented

according to areas that arose from participants' comments. These themes were briefly summarised by the researcher before linking evidence from the participants' comments. These coded points were then linked to a possible criterion from the observational framework to determine whether the participant is displaying EAP teaching features (see Figure 6).

Participant Interview		
Notable pedagogic features and comments	Evidence	Link to criteria: Evidenced? Partial?
1) Unplanned teaching moments/adapting: Aware of need to adapt to unplanned moments of learning in the classroom- P1 does not move on unless students have managed a part of a lesson. In line with EAP teaching methodology	<i>"Today I planned to play the monologue twice, but after I have noticed...they cannot do that. I decided that I have to play it a third time..."</i>	Evidenced: i) You respond flexibly to unplanned learning opportunities (AT 12: BALEAP)

Figure 5: Extract from coding of Interview

As with the lesson observation data, a summary table was produced for the interview that displayed 'demonstrable' features and 'areas of improvement' against the observational framework criteria. These summary tables were then compared using simple colour codes to help reveal any corresponding features between practice (lesson) and belief (interview) as well as any mismatches.

4. Results

Below are summary tables for all three participants that highlight features of EAP teaching that are 'demonstrable' or 'reported', 'not demonstrable' or 'not reported', or 'partially demonstrable' or 'partially reported' based on the observational framework criteria of EAP teaching features. They include a connection between the lesson observation and interview to help identify any alignments, mismatches and misalignments, which in turn may reveal matches or mismatches in practice and perceptions. The 'misaligned' or 'mismatched' statuses were observational features which lead to further description and analysis in this section and the discussion section.

Observational Criterion	Interview	Lesson Observation	Alignment Status
k) Clear learning objectives aligned to tasks	Partially reported	Partially demonstrable	Misaligned
m) Feedback on language use	Not reported	Partially demonstrable	Partial
a) Scaffolding academic communication	Reported	Demonstrable	Aligned
b) Strategies for processing/producing texts	Reported	Demonstrable	Aligned
c) Responding to unplanned learning opportunities	Reported	Demonstrable	Aligned
e) Integrating study skills	Reported	Demonstrable	Aligned
h) Navigating academic conventions	Partially reported	Partially demonstrable	Misaligned

Table 3: Summary of Coded Data for Participant 1

Observational Criterion	Interview	Observation	Alignment Status
k) Clear learning objectives aligned to task	Partially reported	Partially demonstrable	Misaligned
m) feedback on language use	Reported	Demonstrable	Aligned
l) stress-free learning environment	Reported	Demonstrable	Aligned
a) Scaffolding academic communication	Reported	Partially demonstrable	Mismatch
c) Responding to unplanned learning opportunities	Partially reported	Partially demonstrable	Misaligned
d) Anticipating student needs	Reported	Partially demonstrable	Mismatch
h) Navigating academic conventions	Reported	Partially demonstrable	Mismatch
j) Awareness of discourse features	Not reported	Demonstrable	Partial

Table 4: Summary of Coded Data for Participant 2

Observational Criterion	Interview	Observation	Alignment Status
k) Clear learning objectives aligned to tasks	Reported	Partially demonstrable	Mismatch
m) Feedback on language use	Reported	Not observed	Partial
a) Scaffolding academic communication	Reported	Partially demonstrable	Mismatch
d) Anticipating student needs	Reported	Not observed	Partial
c) Responding to unplanned learning opportunities	Reported	Partially demonstrable	Mismatch
h) Navigating academic conventions	Reported	Not observed	Partial
l) Stress-free learning environment	Reported	Demonstrable	Aligned
n) Motivating content	Reported	Demonstrable	Aligned

Table 5: Summary of Coded Data for Participant 3

4.1 Participant 1: EAP Knowledge and Practice

Participant one demonstrates they can manage their lesson delivery well, setting up activities while ensuring they have academic related skills embedded within these tasks. They seem able to adapt to unplanned learning moments within a lesson while giving sound pedagogic reasoning behind such decisions, showing an awareness of student need.

4.1.1 Scaffolding Tasks and CLT Approaches

However, the researcher noted that some parts of the set-up and facilitation of tasks neglected pair-work to expedite the elicitation of answers from students while engaging them in more opportunities to communicate in English. In response to this within the respondent validation phase, P1 indicated they were aware of the importance pair work has in eliciting answers in the feedback cycle and its importance in helping students understand tasks before they are undertaken. However, they were hesitant to utilize this technique too frequently as it discourages independent learning and over-reliance on stronger partners' abilities:

It's due to my consideration for exam-oriented practice since lots of students in my class need to at least have an initial try to figure out the answers independently [...] In some previous listening class, they can easily access the answer by being told from some more advanced peers [...] maybe they rely too much on group work to do listening.

4.1.2 Transferability of Academic Skills and Lesson Aims

The data point to an alignment in terms of needing improvement in two key areas for this participant: ensuring their EAP lessons are clear in their transferability of skills to students' future academic contexts; and being fully aware of the objectives of a specific EAP lesson and

how their actions within the lesson ensure these goals are achieved. The extract below from my notes during the lesson observation emphasizes this point concerning helping students navigate future academic conventions:

Although mentioned at the start of the lesson about the importance of listening for their future degrees, more was needed to show how this lesson links to similar academic tasks that students may be faced with. i.e. importance of reading to understand a topic before students listen, like with pre-lecture reading tasks to complete.

Moreover, P1's interview comments indicate they feel the need to have knowledge of terminology from their students' academic disciplines when teaching EAP. This indicates to me how P1 perceives one element of EAP teaching in contrast to GE teaching:

I'm also not that familiar with specific terms, [...] so I need to review those, like in lesson five, we have those differentiator circuits [...]. And I searched online for these subject specific terms. So, an EAP teacher needs knowledge of academic writing ability. Secondly, subject specific vocabulary.

4. 2 Participant 2: EAP Knowledge and Practice

4.2.1 Suitable Learning Environments

Participant two showed evidence of knowing about the importance of establishing stress-free learning environments for teaching, how to provide suitable feedback and teaching relevant discourse features in their EAP classes. The following extract highlights P2's views on how to create a suitable learning environment for students to learn English and EAP:

I'm quite open minded and my classroom will not be rigid [...] students are free to present their opinions. Mainly I use the communicative approach in my classroom. I try to give chances for students to share their ideas, to practice their oral English [...] with pair work or group work. And I try to elicit answers from the students. [...] That's what I think communication approach is. Students have the freedom to choose the way to convey himself, even if it's not applying to the traditions or norms.

It is apparent from both data sets that they appreciate the value of CLT principles, such as pair and group work, and students having personal choice to express themselves in spoken English. They view these principles as having relevance or transfer from a GE teaching environment to an EAP one.

4.2.2 Providing Feedback

Regarding the importance of providing suitable feedback on students' language and input, I note a clear positive alignment with perception and practice.

P2 manages plenary sessions well [...] answers to small, paired tasks are elicited effectively by asking different students their answers to set questions. She reformulates students' answers while ensuring these are displayed on screen for all students to follow.

Takes time to engage with students' answers by asking follow-up questions to elicit more understanding for questions set.

From this comment, I am assuming that P2 knows how to utilise pair work and understands how to effectively utilise a post-task plenary to elicit answers and measure learning accordingly. This is supported by a comment from P2 about giving feedback:

If the students' answer is just partly correct, I acknowledge the parts the students did right. And then, you can direct them to these parts and explain. [...] If I say they are wrong, they will feel bad. If they get the right answer, sometimes I will also paraphrase, giving the correct answer in my way- a kind of confirmation [...].

This perception links to P2's statement about not being a 'rigid' teacher and trying to help students feel at ease. This is further evidence to show she is versed in some aspects of CLT methodology, displaying different strategies to use when giving feedback to students.

4.2.3 Unplanned Learning Moments and Lesson Aims

However, there was a mismatch between their views of how to adapt to unplanned learning moments and what was observed in the lesson. During the interview P2 mentions a part of the lesson where they are working with positive contributions from students and extending an activity that engages them in a task related to the organisation of an abstract from a research article:

When we looked at the abstract of the article related to the solar box oven experiment, there's a lot of interaction between students when they share the answers. Sometimes, when you elicit wrong answers or partly wrong answers from students [...] that can inspire discussion among students. [...] And that gets students to reflect, and they will pay attention to these tasks.

This approach highlights to the researcher a positive unplanned learning opportunity, which demonstrates EAP practice according to the observational framework. However, there is a mismatch between perception and practice, as this unplanned learning moment was rather unwieldy, taking time and focus away from other necessary parts of the lesson, raising questions for the researcher about whether P2 was fully aware of the overall aims of the lesson and how to achieve them. The researcher's comment below alludes to this:

[...] P2 isn't always able to adapt her lesson so that key parts are still prioritised. E.g. exercise 3, was skipped over despite being important to the overall aims of the lesson. This happened as she spent too long on a plenary thereby reducing time to set up subsequent tasks. The lesson finished 10 minutes late.

4.3 Participant 3: EAP Knowledge and Practice

P3 showed strong evidence of creating stress-free environments in their classes to support effective language learning. Moreover, they seemed aware of the need to present content and tasks that were motivating for students, showing they could apply novel ideas to

lesson planning to engage students in relatable EAP material based on topics relevant to the students' degree subject:

In EAP it's much more related to academic skills...to develop the academic skills, we try to mingle the content and that content is not in the daily life, but just relating to their majors, something just artificial intelligence- the students' majors [...].

However, based on this comment, and a lack of demonstrable evidence in the lesson observation, I deduce that the participant is thinking about 'content' as topics related to EAP and is perhaps less aware of broader transferable academic skills needed within EAP teaching.

4.3.1 Scaffolding and Setting Up Tasks

P3 showed some mismatch between beliefs and their observable practice, especially in relation to scaffolding activities, awareness of lesson aims and responding to unplanned learning opportunities. In the extracts below, there is evidence from the interview which shows awareness of being able to set up tasks effectively through elicitation of instruction and vocabulary, understanding the importance these pedagogical features have to their lesson's success:

It's difficult to make sure all students follow my instruction. [...] Sometimes you need to repeat instructions or break them down. With exercises on the handout, I ask some questions e.g. How many words do you need to write? How many parts are there? I found there were some students who feel a bit dizzy about that. [...] from their answers, I got to know whether they follow me or not.

However, the classroom observation revealed several instances where better task set up and elicitation of instructions were needed, as well as consideration of how much time students needed to carry out tasks so learning could be measured and acted on by the teacher:

Many examples of how better modelling of instructions are needed for small tasks [...]. P3 needs to consider how to explain and model tasks to students. Too much time talking about a task rather than just saying to students, very simply, this is what I want you to do, and this is how to do it.

4.3.2 Lesson Objectives

Another example of a mismatch in perception and practice relates to being aware of lesson aims and their importance to the students' current academic requirements and learning needs. It is clear from the following commentary, P3 can relate the value of teaching vocabulary note-taking strategies (topic of the observed lesson) to students' future subject area:

The priority of this lesson is to help the students appreciate the understanding of memorizing vocabulary and using the words in the context of their major. The priority in my delivery is to get them to tell us their understanding of their knowledge of vocabulary. e.g. The pronunciation, the form, meaning and the way to memorize the words [...].

However, there is a mismatch regarding the practice as this aim is not effectively realised in the lesson. I noted several instances where it is not clear through direction, elicitation and importance of time given to certain tasks whether the teacher has fully grasped the lesson aims. The following extract points to not giving an important lesson task much time to complete:

Aims of this lesson are not so clear; students are not shown very explicitly and with examples why they should think about knowing a word. Last activity, which brings together all features of vocabulary note-taking, is only given 5 minutes and the method of eliciting answers from students is too quick to enable an assessment of whether students have learned anything from the preceding activities.

5. Discussion

This section will discuss elements from the results and their implications in terms of what features of EAP teaching are present for the participants and whether the data reveals any significant areas to guide further reflection and discussion with teachers through professional development initiatives.

5.1 Communicative Language Teaching

The analysis of the interview, participant reflection and lesson observation data revealed that the three participants showed they understood what can be considered CLT influenced approaches to their work. All three seemed to embrace notions of learner centredness by; establishing rapport, providing opportunities for students to speak, maximizing student talk time over teacher talk time; and considering students' needs carefully when planning and delivering their lessons (Holliday, 1997, p. 411).

However, there were some examples from P1 and P3's data, which indicate that their practices and beliefs highlighted a need to maintain what might be considered more traditional teacher centred approaches (Zheng & Adamson, 2003) to delivering material, considering what they understand is best for their students. For instance, indicating that pair work does not always produce effective learning, or that their knowledge of students' prior educational experiences from the Chinese school system mean that some of the pre-session course lesson tasks will be uninspiring or ineffectual for their students, leading them to revert to other approaches or methods to deliver this course material.

That is not to say that these interpretations of EAP lesson delivery are invalid or do not lead to appropriate learning conditions for students. On the contrary, it seemed that these interventions or alterations to provided lesson guidance allowed these participants to maintain some traditional teacher centred methods or the 'informal order' (Widdowson, 1987 p. 84) of their educational setting while also embracing teaching approaches influenced by both CLT approaches and EAP methodology. Moreover, students in these observable cases seemed happy to engage with their teacher's direction in these ways.

Based on this analysis of differing teaching approaches, I am conscious of being overly zealous in my interpretation and observation of teaching practice which does not neatly sync

with BALEAP's TEAP descriptors, which are used as an observational framework in this study. Therefore, it would be prudent to avoid viewing these teachers' approaches as novice or needing to be changed according to the initial EAP descriptors I used to evaluate their practice. The TEAP scheme is more UK centric in outlook (Ding & Campion, 2016) and as such, full application to judge teachers in this TNE context may negate previous teaching experience to the detriment of their practice and support to students. Instead, a more nuanced or sensitive consideration of those new to EAP teaching in this context is needed (Ding & Campion, 2016), which may enhance EAP teaching, bringing new insights that lead to a richer description of its methodologies and approaches.

A more relatable lens to observe some EAP approaches in this setting, which can involve CLT models, might be to utilise approaches like the Fusion model of English teaching (Bjorning-Gyde, 2008). This model exemplifies how language teachers in Chinese HE environments might synergise Chinese teacher centred delivery techniques while accommodating learner centred approaches. This might mean an expectation for the outside observer of noticing a balance of tightly controlled tasks that display expected authority of the teacher, while providing a range of opportunities and tasks for students to express their views on topics or ideas in class more expected in CLT informed practice (Bjorning-Gyde, 2008).

5.2 Lesson Aims and their Realisation

One area that all three participants seemed to show a lack of awareness of, in either knowledge or practice, was providing an understanding of clear learning objectives that are aligned to tasks throughout the lesson. All participants could articulate the teaching goals in the observed lessons and the broader goals their students needed to reach on the pre-session course. However, the staging and execution of some parts of lessons led me to question if they were clear about what the teaching priorities were to demonstrate execution of lesson aims. This was evident by some participants not being able to readjust their lesson timings after engaging in unplanned learning moments or giving students suitable opportunity to apply important taught language or skills-introduced in the lesson.

One way of explaining this phenomenon might be to consider how teachers know their students have understood what is being taught through production or use of a skill or language structure. This is akin to what second language researchers term displaying *comprehensible output*, with students having chances to notice gaps in their learning and reflect on usage through feedback from a teacher (Swain, 1985). It might be that this feature of language teaching present in CLT discourse and GE approaches, but also important in EAP teaching (Bruce, 2015), is possibly not appreciated or overlooked by these teachers in this context.

The influences of these teachers' CE teaching and CET focused exam practice might be an explanation for the absence of comprehensible output of their students during some lessons. This teaching experience may have affected their ability to effectively assess how learning is happening in some EAP lessons. This is perhaps similar to Kohnke et al's study which mentions some participants who noticed their teaching had become formulaic and test- focused rather than focusing on students' needs (2022, p. 4). Similarly, Liu et al (2018) report on CET constraints and impediments to enacting effective language production in teaching. These

findings are neatly summed up by Ma in another study, who comments that CET influence has meant 'both universities and students favour the short-term benefits and are reluctant to concentrate on training of communicative competence. Quality education has become empty talk.' (2014, p. 1176). Such influences might imply that teachers in this study feel there is no time given to thinking carefully about effectively managing tasks in an EAP classroom that might require knowledge of assessing student learning through comprehensible output. Being aware of this influence might help guide further discussions with, and research on, teachers working in this context.

5.3 Awareness of Students' Academic Literacies

Being aware of the students' academic literacies (Lea & Street, 1998) needed as part of their future degrees is a key element of an EAP practitioner's skill set (Wingate, 2012). Knowledge of this model allows EAP practitioners to delve into their students' subject areas, considering the way arguments are formed, and language is utilised to communicate within their community of practice, or as Lea and Street term 'argument, structure and clarity' (2006, p. 368). As with other studies into UK based EAP teachers, awareness of the AP (Academic Practice) of EAP is something that is shown to be lacking in teachers transitioning from GE contexts to EAP teaching (Ding & Campion, 2016; Kirk & King, 2022), but one that practitioners also feel is needed (Alexander, 2007). This implies a need to move away from the how of teaching, such as a singular focus on classroom management techniques when teaching the four language skills, but instead for the EAP teacher to support students in developing more meaningful engagement with text and content on pre-sessional courses, to become researchers of their own subject matter (Kirk & King, 2022).

The data in this action research study also point to the three participants' lack of knowledge of academic practices their students need for their PG study. All participants gave indicators (either through their beliefs or practice) of the need to connect their teaching more directly to the skills or language of the students' chosen disciplines or broader higher educational needs. However, some of their views of how they might support students in navigating the communication practices of their subject disciplines seemed to relate to teaching related topics of students' subject area (Engineering or Artificial Intelligence) or the specific terminology used by students. As similarly reported by Cai (2021) into a study on EAP teacher development, this might come from the belief that they do not know enough about Engineering or the language used by engineers to support their students, or indeed a belief in needing to be an expert in this subject to broach it in an EAP lesson. In such instances, teachers might unwisely shy away from the subject areas of their students or feel they are not qualified to comment or connect their EAP teaching to students' subjects (Alexander, 2007; Campion, 2016).

Extending the conclusions reached by Gao and Bartlett (2014) of a study into EAP teacher development at Peking University, professional development opportunities can help teachers in this context develop confidence by showing them they do not need to be experts in their students' subject matter to teach EAP. Carefully presented and relatable initiatives could help them become aware that they have skills as language instructors that can apply to EAP teaching situations where they are analysing disciplinary text and discourse to help their

students recognise these specific ways of ‘talking, writing, thinking and [...] literacy typified by members of that group, or culture’ (Lea & Street, 2006, p. 368).

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The aim of this research project was to notice EAP related features of teaching knowledge and practice in three participants teaching on an 8-week pre-session course at a TNE partnership institution in China. It was also aiming to identify possible teacher training initiatives that can further develop the practice of these teachers and others like them working in this context. The multi-methods of data analysis have revealed that all three participants are versed in suitable teaching approaches, originating from their GE teaching backgrounds, which serve to provide supportive learning environments for their students on this course. They also displayed knowledge and some corroborating practices which indicated they knew how to teach EAP lessons while also applying some techniques from their language teaching backgrounds to deliver material effectively to students.

However, the data and subsequent analysis also revealed scope for further support to guide these teachers at this institution in becoming more familiar with suitable EAP teaching approaches. These related to being aware of how best to identify and enact the learning outcomes of a lesson; considering the academic practice demands of their students’ subject areas and how best to tailor their teaching to these requirements.

Following on from this ‘reconnaissance stage’ (Atkins & Wallace, 2012) of this action research cycle, the following ideas in the next sub-section could be useful to support some immediate interventions during a pre-session course induction.

6.1 Prioritising Lesson Tasks

Tutors working on future iterations of this pre-session course could be led through an example of a lesson, highlighting which part allows most free practice for students to demonstrate their learning in achieving the outcomes of the lesson. Coupled with this, teachers could explain how a lesson from the pre-session might be taught and how each stage fits together, along with anticipation of possible teaching or learning problems. Useful questions to guide this type of instruction might be: What do we want to do and why? How long will each part take? What are the mechanisms for student engagement or interaction? What might go wrong and how to deal with these problems? (Harmer, 2001, p. 159).

During this task, teachers could also be asked how teaching instructions within the lesson guidance material might conflict with their own approaches to teaching. This might broaden the reflective discussion to maintaining or justifying approaches which might not fit neatly within a CLT/BALEAP view of teaching but may still be pertinent to this EAP context.

6.2 Students’ Academic Socialisation

Another area of development relates to supporting teachers in applying their skills as discourse analysts to help students navigate their subjects’ academic communication styles and genres. Teachers could be shown how application of discourse analysis theory, such as social or

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cognitive genre (Bruce, 2015), are used to deconstruct text or genre and then repurpose them for an EAP lesson. This might give teachers confidence in applying their language teaching abilities by deconstructing academic text and genre without being subject specialists themselves. Moreover, utilising such theories might also give them foundations to further investigate the communicative practices of students' subject matter and devise their own EAP teaching materials.

6.3 Limitations

The limitations of this study are related to its methodology, short length, number of participants and scope of inquiry into participants' practice across a breadth of EAP lessons. These limitations thus question the generalisability of knowledge that can be transferred to similar teaching contexts in other TNE settings. However, the action research nature of this project can serve those teachers specifically working in this Chinese receiving TNE Institution as it will inevitably lead to further evaluation and refinement of teacher training initiatives and EAP course redesign that stem from this initial inquiry. Moreover, it might prove relatable for others working in similar TNE contexts who are considering their own research and developmental initiatives.

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the manuscript preparation process

I used ChatGPT to check through my reference list entries according to the APA style. It made some suggestions to repetitive errors I was making which I then used to revise my list. I did not use any GenAI in other ways during the writing and planning of this article.

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Appendices

Appendix A

General Questions

- 1) Tell me a bit about your teaching experience. How long have you been teaching English as a Foreign Language?
- 2) In what contexts have you taught English as a foreign language? Levels, courses places etc?
- 3) How long have you been teaching what you understand EAP to be? In what contexts?
- 4) What do you think EAP is? How does it differ to general English language teaching?
- 5) How have you tried to develop and improve your understanding of the subject of EAP during your career?
- 6) Is it important to understand more about EAP and how to teach in your current context?

Questions about the Observed Lesson

- 7) Can you explain some of the features of the lesson you thought were positive? Why?
- 8) Can you explain which parts of your lesson could have gone better? Why?
- 9) At which points in your lesson do you think you were able to show the following features (if applicable to the specific lesson)
 - How you adapted materials for specific academic contexts?
 - How you managed to scaffold your teaching for your students?
 - How you used different classroom assessment techniques to support your students' learning?
 - How you trained your students to investigate the practices of their discipline?
 - How you responded flexibly to unplanned learning opportunities?
 - How you encouraged a critical approach to understanding a topic?

Appendix B

Respondent Validation Checking

Time	Observation	Comment	Respondent Comment
0:45	Lesson starts. Teacher directs students' attention to first paragraph of handout, which all students have printed copies of. This handout is projected on screen for all students to see as well. This first paragraph was written by materials writer. Students asked to read it and to find out what aim of lesson is. They do this alone before teacher starts nominating individual students and asking them for answers to the question ;'What is the aim of the lesson? As students give her answers, show tries to help them paraphrase some words i.e. 'do you know another word for inspire?' (Inspire was a word within the blurb at the top of the handout). She also asks students of they know the Chinese word for 'inspire'	The instructions are given in a way that assume students know what they are doing- perhaps better exemplification of instruction is needed. It seems strange for me (observer) to ask students to read through the blurb at the start of the handout like this. I would be more likely just to tell students what we are doing and perhaps elicit words like inspiration and inspire and ask students who inspires them to help start the class and give context...but that seems to be too CLT or influenced by that kind of teaching pedagogy	The context is that T told Ss the day before that they would have listening practice. That's why T asked Ss to read the 1st para of the note and began with the Q "What are the listening materials mainly about?" Influenced by "Learner Autonomy" pedagogy by Davide Little, this Q aims to push the Ss to find out the topic by themselves instead of directly telling them. It probably helped to avoid delayed concentration and foster Ss to be aware of LO s.