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Demystifying institutional practices: critical pragmatism and the teaching of academic writing ☆

Nigel Harwood [a,*], Gregory Hadley [b]

[a] *Department of Language & Linguistics, University of Essex, Wivenoe Park, Colchester CO4 3S2, UK*
[b] *Department of Information Culture, Niigata University of International and Information Studies, 3-1-1 Mizukino, Niigata-shi, Niigata-ken 950-2292, Japan*

Abstract

Three approaches to the teaching of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) are identified, the Critical approach, the Pragmatic approach, and the Critical Pragmatic approach. Critical EAP is appealing pedagogically because of its restive questioning of discourse norms, although it can seem reactionary at times. By focusing on the acquisition of the same dominant norms, Pragmatic EAP has a clear goal, but it often fails to acknowledge difference in community practices. Critical Pragmatism fuses Critical EAP's focus on difference in the academy with Pragmatic EAP's focus on access to the academy. The Critical Pragmatic approach is illustrated by activities for postgraduate and research students which centre on the use of personal pronouns and possessive adjectives.

1. Introduction

Theresa Lillis (1999) has argued that academic writing is 'mysterious', that its practices are poorly understood by teachers and students alike. Lillis' assertion is

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* Corresponding author. Address: Department of Language and Linguistics, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester CO4 3SQ, UK. Tel.: +44-(0)1206-872-633; fax: +44-(0)1206-872198.
E-mail address: nharwood@essex.ac.uk (N. Harwood).

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supported by research taking place in a number of areas. Corpus studies and ethnographies, for instance, have demonstrated that academic discourse varies enormously from field to field, consisting of a mass of disciplinary and subdisciplinary variations (e.g. Hyland, 2000, 2002; Prior, 1998). Qualitative interviews with students reveal that although some lecturers continue to believe that academic discourse is a homogeneous, easily identifiable phenomenon which can be taught unproblematically by EAP support units, students are presented with a different understanding of what precisely constitutes 'good writing' depending on which members of staff they talk to (Lea & Stierer, 2000). Students are obliged to change their writing style from assignment to assignment in an attempt to give the lecturer the kind of writing they require (Lea & Street, 2000). Finally, students' own retrospective accounts of how they came to terms with life in the academy (e.g. Fan Shen, 1989; Fox, 1994) reveal the formidable nature of the challenges they face to produce successful writing. While the acquisition of academic literacy may be akin to a game (Casanave, 2002; Newman, 2001), it is a game with a bewildering set of rules, many of which are never made explicit to student writers. What is the best approach for the EAP practitioner to adopt to demystify these writing practices?

After briefly discussing and distinguishing between three approaches to the teaching of writing and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) – the Pragmatic, Critical, and Critical Pragmatic approaches – we discuss the pros and cons of Critical and Pragmatic EAP, before arguing that the Critical Pragmatic approach is to be preferred. This third approach is illustrated through a number of pedagogical activities aimed at postgraduate and research students which focus on the use of personal pronouns and possessive adjectives in academic writing.

2. Pragmatic EAP, Critical EAP, and Critical Pragmatic EAP

While we would concede with Canagarajah (1999) that Critical Pedagogy cannot be reified and viewed as a settled body of thought, we have chosen, albeit simplistically, to distinguish between three approaches to the teaching of academic writing: *Pragmatic EAP*, *Critical EAP*, and *Critical Pragmatic EAP*. Although we recognize it is somewhat reductive to pretend that all teachers and materials writers align themselves directly with one of these three camps, creating these distinctions nevertheless highlights the various preoccupations of those involved with EAP.

Pragmatic EAP is concerned with teaching students a set of dominant academic discourse norms, i.e., the Anglo-American type. Johns (1993, p. 274) summarizes what pragmatism entails when she says that the goal of an EAP course is 'to prepare ESL/EFL and native-speaking students for the literacy demands at the secondary or college/university level'. It is a skills-based, instrumental approach that attempts to make students aware of the dominant conventions in Anglo-American writing, and then successfully appropriate these same conventions. *Critical EAP*, on the other hand, is concerned with '*critiquing* existing educational institutions and practices,

and subsequently *transforming* both education and society' (Hall, 2000, p. 3. Original emphasis. See also Benesch, 2001; Giroux, 1988; Pennycook, 1994a, 1994b, 1997, 1999, 2001). A Critical approach condemns Pragmatic EAP for making no attempt to question the desirability of reinforcing these predominant norms. By requiring students to conform to them, academic conventions are implicitly seen as benign or at least value-free, 'natural', and worthy of imitation. Rather than obliging the academy to adapt to L2 students' rhetorical styles, Pragmatic EAP expects international students to adapt to those of the (Anglo-American) academy. A critical approach views most of these existing practices with suspicion: they perpetuate the unjust status quo that marginalizes less powerful groups – in this case, international students. Rather than seeing dominant discourse conventions as 'natural', Critical EAP views them as '*naturalized*', 'the product of relations of power' (Ivanič, 1998, p. 81). From this standpoint, Pragmatic EAP tends to view the ideal learner as passive and accommodating, while a critical pedagogy

> is founded on a view of learners as intellectuals, as researchers and as active participants in social struggles, not just passively receiving knowledge and advice, but searching for understandings which will be of direct use to them, which will open up new fields of vision and new perspectives, and provide a basis for their own emancipatory and transformatory action. (Ivanič, 1998, pp. 337–338)

On a practical level, then, taking a critical approach to EAP is to recognize that academic discourse practices are neither fixed nor immutable: they are socially constructed and therefore open to contestation and change by the learners (Ivanič, 1998). Critical EAP constitutes problematizing as fundamental to pedagogy in general and EAP in particular (cf. Pennycook, 1999).

Critical Pragmatic EAP attempts to reconcile these seemingly irreconcilable approaches. On the one hand, it acknowledges that students should be exposed to dominant discourse norms, in line with Pragmatic EAP; while on the other hand, like Critical EAP, it stresses that students have choices and should be free to adopt or subvert the dominant practices as they wish. Critical Pragmatic EAP therefore has two objectives: 'to help students perform well in their academic courses while encouraging them to question and shape the education they are being offered' (Benesch, 2001, p. xvii). Pennycook (1994b, pp. 317–318) balances the pragmatic and the critical thus:

> While on the one hand...I need to help students meet the criteria for 'success' as they are defined within particular institutional contexts, as a critical educator I need also to try to change how students understand their possibilities and I need to work towards changing those possibilities. I am not, therefore, advocating a *laissez-faire* approach to language forms that encourages students to do as they like, as if English language classrooms existed in some social, cultural and political vacuum. Rather I am suggesting that first, we need to make

> sure that students have access to those standard forms of the language linked to social and economic prestige; second, we need a good understanding of the status and possibilities presented by different standards; third, we need to focus on those parts of language that are significant in particular discourses; fourth, students need to be aware that those forms represent only one set of particular possibilities; and finally, students also need to be encouraged to find ways of using the language that they feel are expressive of their own needs and desires, to make their own readings of texts, to write, speak and listen in forms of the language that emerge as they strive to find representations of themselves and others that make sense to them, so that they can start to claim and negotiate a voice in English.

The need both to give students access to the dominant discourse conventions and to respect cultural and rhetorical difference is called 'a classic tension in critical approaches to education' (Pennycook, 1997, p. 265). He continues:

> In work on critical literacy, for example, this tension emerges in the differences between those who primarily emphasise *access* to the cultures of power, and those who emphasise the exploration of *difference*.

We argue that the distinction Pennycook draws could equally serve to differentiate Pragmatic and Critical EAP. To summarize, we can place the three approaches to the teaching of EAP on the cline shown in Fig. 1:

It is important to state at this point that what we call Critical EAP and Critical Pragmatic EAP is not necessarily equivalent to what other researchers mean when they use the same terms. We agree with much of what Benesch (1993, 2001) says about pedagogy, for instance. However, she prefers the term *Critical EAP*. And although we go on to critique Critical EAP later in this paper, we are critiquing a 'purer', less pragmatic form of pedagogy than Benesch has in mind.

Having outlined the basic tenets of the three approaches, we now consider the case for teaching via both Critical EAP and Pragmatic EAP. It will be argued that both pedagogies provide valuable insights, and that by standing midway between purer forms of Critical and Pragmatic EAP, Critical Pragmatism can provide practitioners with the best of both worlds.

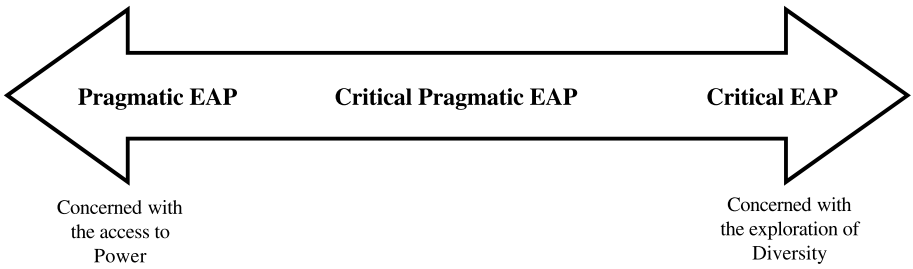

Fig. 1. Pragmatic EAP, Critical EAP, and Critical Pragmatic EAP.

3. The case for Critical EAP

3.1. The difficulty of describing academic discourse and discourse practices

In constructing a case for a critical approach to EAP, let us begin by looking at a passage often used to justify a pragmatic pedagogy:

> Every time a student sits down to write for us, he has to invent the university for the occasion – invent the university, that is, or a branch of it, like history or anthropology or economics or English. The student has to learn to speak our language, to speak as we do, [...] to work within fields where the rules governing the presentation of examples or the development of an argument are both distinct and, even to a professional mysterious.
>
> The student has to appropriate (or be appropriated by) a specialized discourse, and he has to do this as though he were easily and comfortably one with his audience, as though he were a member of the academy or an historian or an anthropologist or an economist; he has to invent the university by assembling and mimicking its language... He must learn to speak our language. Or he must dare to speak it or to carry off the bluff, since speaking and writing will most certainly be required long before the skill is "learned". And this, understandably, causes problems. (Bartholomae, 1985, pp. 134–135)

Although pragmatic, Bartholomae's paper is honest enough to acknowledge some of the problems which necessarily accompany such an approach. The fact, for instance, that the academy cannot be viewed as a homogeneous entity is foregrounded by the mention of various subdisciplines. Indeed, a number of studies conducted more recently have confirmed that academic discourse varies enormously (e.g. Bazerman, 1988; Bazerman & Paradis, 1991; Hyland, 1996, 1998). It is neither monolithic nor homogeneous, consisting instead of a plethora of disciplinary and subdisciplinary variations (e.g. Prior, 1998).

Bartholomae also hints that lecturers' expectations of their students are unrealistic. Since the journey from writing like a neophyte to writing like an expert is long and arduous (and most of our students never complete it), students 'mimic' expert practices rather than truly 'learning' them: 'The student, in effect, has to assume privilege without having any...[L]earning...becomes more a matter of imitation or parody than a matter of invention or discovery' (Bartholomae, 1985, p. 143). Bartholomae himself, then, problematizes many of the assumptions which less thoughtful advocates of pragmatism may overlook. With reference to Bartholomae's concept of students imitating expert practices, the assumption here is that students are striving to imitate their tutors' academic discourse. However, most undergraduate writing tasks are not 'proper' academic writing, if we consider proper academic writing to be, say, a research article in a journal (Horowitz, 1986). It is therefore questionable as to how relevant such writing practices will be to students (Ivanič,

1998); indeed, the question of whether we should see students as neophytes at all should be reconsidered (Benesch, 2001). [1] This is because lecturers themselves are unsure of, and/or disagree about, students' status in the academy: research shows that lecturers have differing ideas about what constitutes good academic writing, leading some researchers to conclude that no single version exists that can be handed down to our students (e.g. Elbow, 1991; Lea & Stierer, 2000; Lea & Street, 2000):

> What 'counts' as 'good writing' is...partly a matter of the individual preferences of teaching staff, or the individual interpretation by teaching staff of the ostensibly 'given' rules of good writing. (Lea & Stierer, 2000, p. 4)

In a similar vein, here is what one of Lea and Street's (2000, p. 41) student interviewees reported:

> 'The thing I'm finding most difficult in my first term here is moving from subject to subject and knowing how you're meant to write in each one. I'm really aware of writing for a particular tutor as well as for a particular subject. Everybody seems to want something different.'

Students were given conflicting advice regarding style, organization, and the use of metadiscourse and personal pronouns in their writing. Far from being simply 'common sense', then, we must agree with Lillis' (1999) verdict that writing successfully for the academy is an 'institutional practice of mystery'. While we will argue below that corpus-based Critical Pragmatism can help the EAP teacher determine what the dominant discourse norms are, for the moment we limit ourselves to making the point that these norms often fail to hold good across the entire disciplinary spectrum. Furthermore, a dominant norm for expert writers may not be a dominant norm for student writers. [2]

[1] Despite the fact that this paper focuses on postgraduate and research students, and assumes that a greater proportion of these students *will* see themselves as neophytes striving to gain a foothold in the academic community, it is acknowledged that much of what is said will perhaps be less appropriate for undergraduate EAP teaching. A pragmatic approach can provide a helpful framework for undergraduates beginning to come to terms with the practices of academic writing. (Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for this observation.)

[2] The pragmatists' arguments are far more sophisticated these days than simply assuming there is a single model of academic writing which holds good across the entire disciplinary spectrum, and is as valid for an undergraduate paper as for a dissertation or a journal article. (Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for this observation). While we would agree that this is undoubtedly true of pragmatists in applied linguistics at the leading edge of research, we believe that, as Lea and Stierer (2000) and Lea and Street (2000) show, the idea of a single model persists in other departments – and probably in some EAP units also. Certainly many of the style manuals for graduate students give the mistaken impression that academic writing is homogeneous. According to Day (1998, p. 210), for instance, first person *we* for single-authored papers is off limits. Students are warned: 'Do not use the "editorial we" in place of "I." The use of "we" by a single author is outrageously pedantic.' However, our corpus data shows that *we* is the personal pronoun of choice for Computer Scientists and Physicists writing single-authored papers.

Finally, we should add an additional problem to the already formidable list which pragmatism must address: some students may have no wish, in Bartholomae's (1985) words, to 'speak as we do', i.e. as established members of the academy. What is to be done with such students if an unquestioning pragmatic approach is adopted?

3.2. Normativity as straitjacket

Even if we *can* describe Anglo-American academic discourse, the fact is that we will not be engaging in a value-free pedagogy, as some practitioners seem to assume. Rather than viewing knowledge as negotiated (and negotiable), Pragmatic EAP would prefer to view it as preconstructed and not open to change (cf. Canagarajah, 1999). By teaching students the dominant discourses, critical pedagogues have argued, we are reinforcing and perpetuating the exclusionary status quo, which is intolerant of difference and excludes non-native speakers, depriving them of their own voices (see Allison, 1996). It follows that a pragmatic pedagogy is no less ideological than a critical pedagogy. The only difference is that the former is ideologically covert, whereas the latter is explicit (Benesch, 1993, 2001; Canagarajah, 1999; Hall, 2000; Pennycook, 1994b, 1997).

Furthermore, students' accounts of their efforts to fit into the academy show that they can feel straitjacketed by these dominant discourses. Fan Shen (1989) gives us some idea of the pain apprentice writers undergo when she concludes that learning to write successfully in another language is tantamount to being forced to assume another identity. 'Reprogramming the mind' is required, since the values which underpin Anglo-American discourse are often absent from other cultures' writing:

> . . .when I write in English I have to wrestle with and abandon (at least temporarily) the whole system of ideology which previously defined me in itself. I had to forget Marxist doctrines and the Party lines imprinted in my mind and familiarize myself with a system of capitalist/bourgeois values. (Fan Shen, 1989, p. 461)

Such a radical change was only possible by the writer imagining herself 'in a new body' (Fan Shen, 1989, p. 462), and, while she was not forced to *lose* her original Chinese identity, it was necessary to gain a separate one for writing in English:

> Any time I write in Chinese, I resume my old identity, and obey the rules of Chinese composition such as "Make the "I" modest, and "Beat around the bush before attacking the central topic".[. . .] But when I write in English, I imagine myself slipping into a new "skin" [. . .]. Looking back, I realize that the process of learning to write in English is in fact a process of creating and defining a new identity and balancing it with the old identity. (Fan Shen, 1989, p. 466)

One of Fox's (1994, pp. 69–70) informants speaks of similar experiences coming from Nepal to the US:

> . . .in Nepal, if someone is direct, everybody says he is not a good writer. Here, I am supposed to be very aggressive, both in my vocabulary and in my style. I am supposed to do what you call critical analysis. But in Nepal, our style of analysis is different, because people feel pretty much bad about criticizing others.[. . .][I]n order to succeed, I would have to change. I would have to learn to use a very aggressive style that would more or less – you know – slap the reader in the face. My God, that was really hard. You cannot change your habits of a lifetime overnight. Imagine, a person who comes from that kind of culture, who spends half his life, thirty years, forty years, writing, working with people, and then they come here for one or two years, do you expect him to be able to change his style?

Fox then asks her informant whether such a change of style is possible:

> "Ah, to some extent", Surya answered, smiling. "He can learn new vocabulary. He can force himself to adopt the direct type of organization. But doing this would be very painful, and at the end he would not feel satisfied. It might turn out to be an excellent paper in this system, but to him it would be nothing".

Once we begin to appreciate the daunting obstacles that our students face in trying to accommodate to these discourse patterns, some researchers feel we would do well to redirect our efforts elsewhere: why not instead educate the community's conservative gatekeepers about World Englishes? Kachru (1997, p. 344) justifies this position thus:

> First,[. . .] it is not possible to train the entire English-using population of the world to the way of thinking and writing in American, British or any other variety of English.[· · ·] A narrow view of what constitutes good writing may shut out a large number of original studies from publication and dissemination. . .

As many who would have been formerly excluded from the academy are allowed access, the academy should become more flexible and tolerant of diversity (Belcher & Braine, 1995). In such an environment, a more critical, less pragmatic future for EAP would seem more appropriate.

4. The case for Pragmatic EAP

4.1. Demystifying the academy for neophytes

An argument which is commonly advanced in favour of pragmatism concerns the status of our postgraduate/research students as neophytes. There is a feeling that, unlike established researchers, neophytes are able to get away with far less personal/idiosyncratic variation in terms of style or discourse. Apprentices must learn and follow the rules; it is generally only renowned researchers who are permitted to be

more unconventional in their discourse (Belcher & Braine, 1995, p. xviii; Bloor & Bloor, 1991, p. 11; Johns, 1997, p. 68). Hence a failure to teach the dominant discourse norms will do nothing to lessen the degree of marginalization felt by some of our students (Elbow, 1991). This is especially true in centre countries, where, according to Canagarajah (1999), lecturers are often particularly uncompromising in their demand that students conform to the dominant norms. Neither should we ignore the fact that many international students both want and expect EAP teachers to demystify the academy for them (Belcher & Braine, 1995).

4.2. Publishing in the academy

Since we are focusing here on postgraduate and research students, rather than undergraduates, we are assuming that a proportion of these students will want to enter the academy and will wish to publish journal papers. However, a review of the literature which deals with L2 researchers' attempts to publish in English is gloomy reading, and makes taking a pragmatic approach to EAP appealing.

Canagarajah (1996) describes the manifold obstacles already in place that hinder periphery researchers from getting their papers published by centre journals. Periphery researchers often lack the resources to obtain centre journals or to travel to conferences, thus making it difficult for them to keep up with the latest research developments. Consequently, their manuscripts may look like 'old news' to editors and reviewers. Many journals are 'international' in name only: their editors, reviewers, and papers they publish are overwhelmingly North American or western European. Hence there is a bias against submissions from what editors and reviewers deem 'obscure places' (Peters & Cenci, 1982), and the gatekeepers are possibly prejudiced against non-native speaker scripts anyway (Gibbs, 1995). Flowerdew's (2000, p. 135) informant Oliver, a Hong Kong researcher, certainly holds the view that discrimination exists. Oliver speaks of the difficulty Hong Kong scholars have in getting their manuscripts past the gatekeepers:

> 'I think Hong Kong scholars to be published in international journals is real hard. I think first of all it's the language problem. I think the journal editors' first impression of your manuscript they discover that it is not written by a native speaker – no matter how brilliant your idea, they will have the tendency to reject.'

Indeed, at times the gatekeepers imply that non-nativeness constitutes one of the factors which contribute towards the rejection of Oliver's papers:

> 'What makes me feel bad is I get letters from the reviewer, and in the first two sentences it will say this is definitely not written by a native speaker – they shouldn't point this out as part of the main criteria for rejecting the article.' (Flowerdew, 2000, p. 135)

It should be conceded that two of Flowerdew's other studies paint a less depressing picture. Although Flowerdew (1999) found that of the non-native

Cantonese-speaking academics he interviewed, 29% felt they were at a disadvantage compared to native speaker researchers, and that journal referees were indeed prejudiced, this would leave the majority feeling either unsure or at no disadvantage. And Flowerdew (2001) shows journal editors generally being as sympathetic to non-native contributions as possible, and welcoming manuscripts from outside the centre countries and research communities. However, this latter study focused on applied linguistics editors, who may well be more aware of, and sensitive to, non-native speakers' problems than editors are in other disciplines.

L2 researchers also have to deal with editors and reviewers' negative attitudes towards world Englishes. Indeed, even within the discipline of applied linguistics, Flowerdew (2001) reported some findings which display disturbing attitudes towards contributions written in local varieties of English: one editor reports some reviewers as 'incredibly intolerant', while one of the editors found the idea of nativization of discourse 'rather astonishing' (p.142). The fact that journals are rejecting the vast majority of manuscripts submitted for publication – several of the editors of mainstream British and north American physics, chemistry, and biology journals Gosden (1992) corresponded with put the figure at over 70%, while Swales (1990) claims that the figure is even higher in the arts and humanities at 80–95% – helps to explain why the editors in Gosden's (1992) study admitted they were, in effect, 'looking for reasons to reject manuscripts', and that 'linguistic grounds [were] as good a reason as any for rejection' (p.129).

Our argument here, then, is that refusing to take a pragmatic approach to EAP and neglecting to teach our postgraduate/research students Anglo-American discourse norms will only further prejudice the conservative gatekeepers against them: teaching L2 speakers the dominant academic norms will allow them to 'compete on an equal basis' with their L1 counterparts (Gosden, 1992, p. 123). A failure to publish in English in the current climate is tantamount to a researcher cutting themselves off from the international community and jeopardizing their chances of promotion (Flowerdew, 1999; Ventola & Mauranen, 1991). By neglecting to teach our students the dominant discourse norms, then, we are helping to maintain the unjust status quo, since it will be the L1 researchers who will continue to be more likely to have their work published. It could be countered that non-native speakers can get a native speaker to revise their manuscripts and hence satisfy the gatekeepers, meaning that it is unnecessary for the L2 academic to conform to the dominant discourse norms themselves. However, research indicates that the language revision system is unsatisfactory, with L2 writers reporting that revisers' corrections often failed to convey intended meanings (Ventola & Mauranen, 1991).

4.3. The shortcomings of critical pedagogy

Critical pedagogy has been critiqued on a number of grounds, not least by its advocates. Indeed, many of the attacks on critical pedagogy have been instigated by those who are themselves most closely associated with it. This is because, as Pennycook (1999, 2001) has argued, one of the main tenets of critical pedagogy is 'the restive problematization of the given', continually reflecting and questioning itself. For the

present purposes, however, it is possible to argue that the case for Pragmatic EAP is strengthened if alternative pedagogies can be shown to be less than satisfactory.

While critical pedagogy is always ready to criticize mainstream practices, it fails to offer pedagogical alternatives (Ellsworth, 1989) or readily implementable classroom episodes (Benesch, 2001; Dudley-Evans, 2001), bringing to mind the powerful argument that practitioners are unlikely to take to a theory which is not operationalizable (cf. Thornbury, 1998). The fact that critical classroom activities have not yet been widely disseminated and made available to teachers would seem potentially disastrous; we can only imagine how critical pedagogy is likely to be misrepresented by practitioners armed with only a little theoretical knowledge and few examples of classroom activities. There is an urgent need for Critical EAP to focus on implementation. Allison (1998, p. 314) puts this well:

> ...I take the view that responsible professionals must indeed ask themselves *whether* what they are doing should be done at all, and *why* they are doing it. These are questions to which one must keep returning in order to retain a sense of purpose and responsibility. To dwell exclusively on these questions, however, would itself become irresponsible, as it would mean that "*how*" questions (together with many *who, what, when* and *where* questions) never reached the reflective agenda at all, to the detriment of professional practice.

Instead, there is a tendency for critical pedagogy to concern itself with 'lofty theory' (Benesch, 2001) or impenetrable jargon (Canagarajah, 1999), couched in 'the language of proletarian protest', which is likely to result in alienating many potential converts (Johnston, 1999). Indeed, not only is the discourse of critical pedagogy often fashionably 'radical', it is also dangerously dogmatic and judgemental, falling into the very trap it accuses mainstream pragmatist pedagogy of falling into. It can be so vociferous in its criticism of Pragmatic EAP's perpetuation of the dominant discourses, for instance, that it pressurizes students into rejecting all mainstream practices – thereby, as Clark (1992, p. 135) neatly puts it, 'moving from one kind of prescriptivism to another', being as undemocratic and unreflexive as its pragmatic equivalent (Ellsworth, 1989; Johnston, 1999). There is a need, then, for critical pedagogy to question, rather than pontificate (Pennycook, 1999). Critical pedagogy criticizes pragmatic pedagogy for constructing students into a passive, unquestioning role. However, the supposedly empowering practices of critical pedagogy can consist of enlightened practitioners 'liberating' their students from the shackles of normativity in a manner which also constructs students as passive receivers in an unequal relationship (Lather, 1992).

5. Striking a balance: Critical pragmatic EAP

5.1. Critical EAP

We have seen that Critical EAP provides us with an insight into academic writing practices that Pragmatic EAP does not by problematizing the pragmatic tenet that

academic discourse is monolithic. In line with the Sociology of Science literature (e.g. Becher, 1989; Whitley, 2000), Critical EAP emphasizes the disciplinary divergence of the academy and highlights the entrenched conservatism and undemocratic nature of the academic publishing world that can be intolerant of less dominant discourse practices. By revealing that lecturers' expectations of student texts are inconsistent and probably unrealistic, Critical EAP shows that both students and lecturers should question their beliefs about what constitutes 'good' academic writing. The truth is that academic writing practices vary from discipline to discipline, from department to department, and even from lecturer to lecturer. Critical pedagogy reminds us of the difficulty many L2 speakers have when they try to follow Anglo-American discourse norms, and it forces us to question the underlying assumption of pragmatism that every student should follow, and should wish to follow, these same norms.

5.2. Pragmatic EAP

Pragmatic EAP also reminds us of the normativity of the academy. Where Critical EAP tends to focus on a critique of such conservatism, however, a pragmatic approach accepts this conservatism and focuses rather on helping students demystify, then come to terms with its directives. Neophytes are expected to follow the rules while only established researchers are allowed to break them. This is particularly apparent from the literature dealing with L2 speakers' attempts to publish in journals. Initially disadvantaged when compared to their native speaker peers, failing to teach students the dominant norms will only further marginalize L2 speakers in the gatekeepers' eyes.

5.3. Critical Pragmatic EAP

Both Critical EAP and Pragmatic EAP have been accused of prescriptivism, but on different grounds. Due to its rigorous questioning of discourse conventions, Critical EAP can seem reactionary, pressurizing students to deliberately flout established practices without good reason. Pragmatic EAP, on the other hand, can be seen as equally prescriptive as it appears to assume that every student can and should conform to these established practices. We suggest that a Critical Pragmatic pedagogy will combine the restive questioning of Critical EAP (while avoiding its more reactionary elements), with the focus on dominant discourse norms which a pragmatic approach stresses. By incorporating both into our pedagogy, the weakness of Pragmatism – its failure to acknowledge the right to difference – is avoided.

6. Corpus-based Critical Pragmatism

Critical Pragmatism attempts to synthesize the preoccupation with difference inherent in critical pedagogy and the preoccupation with access inherent in pragmatic pedagogy. Pennycook (1997) is right to claim the result is a tension: we are torn between granting students access to the academy on the one hand, and allowing diversity and difference to thrive in our students' academic writing on the other. Here is Clark's (1992, pp. 135–136) proposed solution:

> This tension has forced me to try to formulate some sort of basic distinction between conventions. By this I mean placing recognised writing conventions into two categories, of acceptability and/or floutability: those you should not flout and those you can and/or should. Although this grouping is entirely personal it is based upon the range of reactions from subject tutors to my students' work...and partly on the nature and consequences of non-conformity. So the conventions which I would recommend that students do *not* flout are:
>
> *you must substantiate your arguments* [...]
>
> *your arguments must be relevant to your stated aims* [...]
>
> *you must not plagiarise* [...]
>
> *you should follow a recognised referencing convention and be consistent* [...]
>
> The other conventions, particularly those to do with so-called objectivity and 'academic style', are in my view open to legitimate challenge. For example students should be encouraged – but not obliged – to take responsibility for their ideas by using 'I' and other personal expressions instead of masking their position behind the pretence of objectivity with impersonal language.

Clark (1992) is honest enough to concede that the criteria whereby she places the language to be taught into the acceptability/floutability categories are 'entirely personal' (p.135). What we wish to claim, however, is that corpora can provide a far better basis for helping students to decide whether to conform or flout. Armed with corpus data of the frequency with which researchers in various disciplines use certain language, the student will be able to make a more informed choice as to what to do, instead of being obliged to rely on their teacher's (intuitive) pronouncements. [3] Indeed, data from appropriate corpora will reveal that Clark's (1992) acceptability/floutability dichotomy is oversimplistic, and that, depending on the language and discipline in question, we should speak rather of clines than of dichotomies.

Taking a corpus-based approach would put us at odds with statements like Johns' (1997, p. 69) that 'we cannot tell students "truths" about texts or community practices', and Elbow's (1991, p. 138) position:

> The fact is that we can't teach academic discourse because there's no such thing to teach. Biologists don't write like historians. [...] So although some students may need to write like historians or biologists, few of us in English can teach them to do so. To write like a historian or biologist involves not just lingo but doing history or biology – which involves knowing history and biology

[3] Corpora of good student writing as well as expert writing could of course also be used, especially given Horowitz's (1986) point that student and expert writing are two distinct genres.

> in ways we [i.e. EAP teachers] do not. In short we are not qualified to teach most kinds of academic discourse.

While Elbow (1991) is undoubtedly correct to claim that writing like a historian is much more than a matter of mastering disciplinary lexis, we suggest that corpus-based Critical EAP helps to counter Elbow's argument, which reiterates that of Spack (1988), in stating that EAP teachers are never going to possess the necessary disciplinary knowledge their students from faculties across the university require. Corpus data will provide us (and our students) with at least a degree of insight into the discourse practices of any discipline, even though we are non-specialists. Less easy to counter, though, is the research mentioned previously by Lea and Stierer (2000) and Lea and Street (2000), which highlights the inconsistencies of lecturers' attitudes as to what constitutes good academic prose. We can envisage the scenario where a student, having consulted a corpus, uses a similar amount of modality in their paper to that of researchers in their discipline, only to be told that their paper uses too much or too little modality for the tutor's liking. While perhaps the ultimate goal of Critical Pragmatic EAP in such a case should be to raise *lecturers*', as well as *students*', awareness of the diverse writing practices in the academy and to aim to make tutors more tolerant of difference, in the immediate context we believe such a hypothetical case shows the necessity of having the students appreciate the possible reactions of their lecturers due to staff's (monolithic) views of the academy, and the potential sanctions and lower grades which can follow the flouting of dominant discourse norms. The pedagogical activities which follow aim to alert students to these possibilities.

7. Corpus-based critical pragmatic pedagogical activities: Personal pronouns/possessive adjectives

We have argued that Clark's (1992) intuitive approach as to what to accept and flout can be improved upon via an informed use of corpus linguistics. It will be recalled that personal pronouns were one of the areas which, according to Clark (1992), students can contest. Hence we have chosen to illustrate Critical Pragmatism via activities dealing with personal pronoun use, in order to strengthen our claim that Clark's (1992) acceptability/floutability dichotomy lacks subtlety. In fact it will be seen that personal pronoun use varies enormously across the disciplinary spectrum. A cursory look at some of the data collected from appropriate corpora will reveal that it is dangerous as well as inaccurate to speak of accepting or flouting conventions without first considering the discipline in question.

The activities which follow were designed for postgraduate and research students studying a number of different disciplines. [4] They are interspersed by explanatory and justificatory remarks.

[4] Our corpus consisted of 40 texts in total, 10 journal articles in four disciplines (Business & Management, Economics, Computing Science, and Physics), and ran to approximately 325,000 words.

7.1. Self-mention in academic papers

Activity 1

How many different ways can you think of to refer to yourself when you're writing an academic paper? Make a list of them below:

(i) _____
(ii) _____
(iii) _____
(iv) _____
(v) _____
(vi) _____
(vii) _____
(viii) _____

We are, of course, acutely aware of the dangers of merely providing students with frequency counts of personal pronoun use without first investigating their main functions in the text. Activity 1 above begins to raise the students' awareness of how personal pronouns can personalize claims and act as a vehicle for self-promotion, or alternatively allow the researcher to conceal themselves behind, say, an inclusive use of *we*. Activity 2 below shifts the focus to specifics, showing that personal pronouns can help the writer map out the structure of the text for the readership, define technical terms, and underscore the methodological soundness of their research (on these and other functions of pronouns, see Hyland, 2001a, 2001b; Kuo, 1999; Luukka & Markkanen, 1997; Myers, 1989; Pennycook, 1994c; Tang & John, 1999). It should be noted that all of the extracts in Activity 2 are from single- rather than multiple-authored RAs.

Activity 2

Look at the following extracts from academic papers.

(i) Why do you think they decide to use these particular pronouns?
(ii) What would be the effect of substituting a different first person pronoun in place of the original one used?
  (a) We do not seem to have theory of how users initially comprehend the capabilities of a technology. The features-based theory of sensemaking triggers (FBST) I present here attempts to fill this gap. (Business and Management paper)
  (b) Hence, we have achieved, at the very least, an accurate analytic representation of the thermodynamic functions of Pu at the temperatures cited. (Physics paper)
  (c) We are not aware of any paper in the literature directly applying Theorem 2.2. (Computing Science paper)
  (d) The purpose of this research, therefore, was to illuminate the practices and processes that are involved in aligning individual and organizational values.

To do this, I drew on a broad body of knowledge on organizational socialization, social influence/conversion, person-organization fit, and commitment. (Business and Management paper)

(e) In Section 3, we note some differences between the current problem and the classical paging problem. In Section 4, we introduce an algorithm for the uniform cost and size case that we call least recently used with lazy updates (LRULU) and show that it is k-competitive. In Section 5, we extend this to the case of arbitrary costs and sizes and present an algorithm that we call landlord with lazy updates (LLU). The results are extended to Young's loose model of competitiveness [14, 15] in Section 6. In Section 7, we consider the implementation costs of the algorithms, and in Section 8 we present directions for further research. (Computing Science paper)

(f) By a well-posed economic model, I mean a model that specifies all of the input processes, observed and unobserved by the analyst, and their relationship to outputs. (Economics paper)

(g) I use the panels of data to observe small changes in enrollment associated with changes in the number of classes in each grade in each school. I use information on each district's class size rules to determine whether change in the number of classes was purely the result of the small change in enrollment triggering a rule. I implement the second identification strategy by comparing the class size and achievement of adjacent cohorts who immediately precede and succeed each such event. (Economics paper)

(iii) Finally, match the quotations with the functions of personal pronouns given below:

1. The writer is showing that there are spaces in the research literature which need to be filled. They are emphasizing their own work is worth reading because it fills this space.
2. The writer is using a personal pronoun near the end of their paper to emphasize how much their research has achieved.
3. The writer is providing the reader with the structure of their paper, telling them what is coming next/later.
4. The writer is showing their paper is methodologically sound.
5. The writer is explaining and defining the specialist language they are going to use.
6. The writer uses a personal pronoun to promote their work, to show their research technique is original and that they 'own' it. The reader is not included!
7. The writer is describing the methodology they used to do their research.

After further extension and consolidation work clarifying these functions for the students (which we have not included here), activity 3 below provides corpus-based frequency counts of the various personal pronouns/possessive adjectives across the range of disciplines the students are studying. The class use their understanding of the functions of personal pronouns/possessive adjectives in academic prose developed above to speculate on the reasons for disciplinary variations, before comparing

their own use of personal pronouns/possessive adjectives against that of established researchers in their discipline.

Activity 3

The following table illustrates frequency of first person pronouns and possessive adjectives in 4 different disciplines: [5]

Discipline	I	ME	MY	OUR	WE	US
Business and Management	4.24	0.28	0.64	0.44	1.05	0.06
Economics	3.24	0.05	0.33	0.13	0.64	0.20
Computing Science	0.23	0.02	0.05	0.99	7.30	0.42
Physics	0.10	0.05	0.03	1.12	5.97	0.29

Personal pronouns and possessive adjectives: cases per 1000 words.

(i) What are the most noticeable similarities and differences when hard and soft disciplines are compared?
(ii) Can you suggest reasons for these similarities and differences?
(iii) Now look at 2 or 3 of your own academic papers, counting and classifying your uses of personal pronouns and possessive adjectives in the same way as the table above. How frequently do you use each type of personal pronoun compared to researchers in your own discipline?

To compare your figures those in the table, it is important to remember that the figures above relate to 1000 words of text. So if your papers are around 3000 words, and you used *I* 15 times in a paper, you would divide your figure by 3 to make it roughly equivalent to the figures in the table. In this case, this would be: $15/3 = 5$.

Once you have made the necessary adjustments, complete the table below to compare your own personal pronoun use with researchers in your field.

	I	ME	MY	OUR	WE	US
Researchers' figures						
My figures						

Having begun to investigate the functions and frequency of personal pronouns and possessive adjectives in a selection of subjects across the academy, the class is now in a position to make an informed choice as to whether to accept or flout their discipline's conventions. Clark (1992) and Benesch (2001) speak of the need

[5] Obviously we make it clear to the class that we cannot make any sweeping statements about the nature of pronoun use across the whole of the disciplinary spectrum, or even about pronoun use across the four disciplines analyzed, on the basis of a corpus of this size. It should be noted that all four instances of *I* found in the Physics articles occurred in acknowledgements sections, rather than in the main body of the text.

to provide students with 'alternatives' or 'choices' should they decide to flout, and we have achieved this by providing the class with models of personal pronoun use from disciplines other than their own. Should someone in a hard discipline wish to make their prose more 'personal', for example, they have been provided with a template from the softer disciplines like Business and Economics. Critical EAP activities should lead learners to ask: What have the writers included/excluded? Why? (cf. Hammond & Macken-Horarik, 1999). From there, 'it is a question of making choices from a range of alternatives within academic writing, trying to find ones which are most in harmony with our sense of ourselves' (Ivanič & Simpson, 1992, p. 142). If the student does decide to conform to the dominant discourse norms, they at least 'conform with open eyes...recogniz[ing] the compromises they are making' (Janks & Ivanič, 1992, p. 318).

One final point is worth making which concerns the exercises that follow. Even researchers who may take a 'purer' critical view than the critical pragmatic view that we are advocating here are aware that students must be warned of the possible outcomes of flouting discourse conventions. Clark (1992) acknowledges that lower grades may be the consequence, and exercises (vi)–(viii) ensure that students discuss the possible outcomes of either accepting or flouting canonical uses of personal pronouns/possessive adjectives in academic discourse. It could perhaps be claimed, however, that these exercises fall into the trap that Clark (1992, p. 135) calls 'moving from one kind of prescriptivism to another' which we have discussed already. That is, by highlighting the possibility of lower grades if conventional personal pronoun use is flouted, the teacher may be pressurizing students to conform, and thus not allowing them a choice between accepting and flouting at all. We would answer this charge by arguing that the teacher should also be prepared to make explicit the possible sanctions students face even when conforming. A tutor in a soft discipline, for instance, may object to a student using *I* because they refuse to grant the student the right to speak 'from the heart', something which they would afford to the writer of a journal article, who, unlike the student, is likely to be an established member of the academic community. The teacher should also perhaps ask the class whether they have had similar experiences to Lea and Street's (2000) students, who reported that 'good writing' meant different things to different staff, and that they consciously altered the way they wrote depending upon the lecturer reading their papers. Again, Lea and Street's (2000) findings may mean that conforming to disciplinary pronoun use will be rewarded by one tutor and penalized by another.

Here then are some final questions that the class could discuss:

(iv) Are the results what you expected? Why/Why not?
(v) How do your figures compare with other members of the group? Discuss possible reasons for similarities/differences.
(vi) Are you using personal pronouns and possessive adjectives in the same way as researchers in your discipline writing journal articles? As a result of comparing your figures with theirs, do you think you'll change the way you write in future? Why/Why not?

(vii) Make a list of arguments which could be used (a) for, and (b) against, using the same number of personal pronouns/possessive adjectives as researchers in your discipline.
(viii) What are some of the possible consequences of using the same number of personal pronouns/possessive adjectives as researchers in your discipline? What are some of the possible consequences if you use personal pronouns/possessive adjectives differently?

Both Ivanič (1998) and Johns (1997) envisage students taking the role of researchers in critical pedagogy, and these activities could be followed up by students compiling corpus data from journal articles in their disciplines and then comparing instances of pronoun use against our figures given in the table above. Lecturers in specific disciplines could also be interviewed and questioned about why they use pronouns/possessive adjectives in the way they do.

8. Corpus-based Critical Pragmatism and academic discourse: other possibilities

Rather than attempting to demonstrate a corpus-based Critical Pragmatic approach with regard to a range of language in academic discourse, we preferred to concentrate on the area of pronouns and possessive adjectives and discuss the issues at greater length. However, there are a number of other areas which would seem to us to lend themselves to a similar pedagogical approach. Pronouns and possessive adjectives are said to belong to one of the categories of interpersonal metadiscourse, that of Person Markers (cf. Crismore & Farnsworth, 1990; Crismore, Markkanen, & Steffensen, 1993; Hyland, 1998; Mauranen, 1993; Vande Kopple, 1985). Other metadiscoursal categories include Attitude Markers (e.g. *annoyingly*; *depressingly*; *valuable*), Hedges (e.g. *approximately*; *it may be speculated that*; *possibly*), and Imperatives and Directives (e.g. *consider*; *note*; *let* $x = 1$). While we lack space here to discuss the various corpus studies which have revealed the disciplinary discrepancies regarding the frequency and use of these types of language (e.g. Holmes, 1995; Hyland, 1998, 2000, 2002; Salager-Meyer, 1994; Swales et al., 1998), we hope it is apparent that a similar approach to these researchers' data could raise many of the same issues which our material brought to the fore with regard to pronouns and possessive adjectives. Why, say, do writers in different disciplines use imperatives in their writing? Are imperatives necessarily face-threatening? Do academic writers use imperatives in the students' L1? How do the class feel about using imperatives in their writing? What are some of the risks of a Master's degree student exhibiting a similar pattern of use of imperatives as a journal writer in their discipline?

We also note that a more qualitative element could be introduced into the classroom activities, examining the different roles language plays in academic discourse. Providing students with general frequency counts of academic lexis is, of course, only a beginning. To return to our pronoun/possessive adjective activities above, while we have stressed that it is important to ensure that learners differentiate between the various functions of *I* and *we*, it would seem sensible to go further, providing a

quantitative analysis of the frequency of these different functions. How often are *I* and *we* used primarily textually to provide the reader with a map of the paper (e.g. *In this article I will do x...Then I will do y...Finally I close by doing z*), as against signalling that a deeply held belief is to follow (e.g. *I do not believe this to be the case*)? Are there identifiable disciplinary preferences? These more qualitative frequency counts would provide learners with a far richer understanding of academic pronoun use.

9. Summary and conclusion

We have attempted to problematize a purely pragmatic, as well as a purely critical, approach to the teaching of EAP. We argue that a corpus-based Critical Pragmatic approach bypasses many of the difficulties inherent in both the pragmatic and critical approaches. If Lillis (1999) is right to call academic writing an 'institutional practice of mystery', then corpus-based critical pragmatism would seem to us to be a means of demystifying it for our students. We end this paper by citing Benesch (2001, p. 64) who summarizes what Critical Pragmatism means to us succinctly and memorably:

> [It] encourages students to assess their options in particular situations rather than assuming they must fulfil expectations. After considering options, they may choose to carry out demands or challenge them.

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Nigel Harwood is a Teaching Fellow in Applied Linguistics at the University of Essex. He has taught English in Greece, Portugal, Spain, and the UK. He is interested in corpus-based approaches to the teaching of writing and materials design.

Gregory Hadley has taught in Japan, the United States, England, and is currently the coordinator of the Communicative English Program (CEP) at Niigata University of International and Information Studies. His most recent works include the book "Action Research in Action" (RELC, 2003), as well as articles in "Action Research", edited by Julian Edge (TESOL, 2001), and "The Japanese Learner", edited by Katie Gray, et al (University of Oxford, 2001).