

## **Speaking in Social Contexts: Issues for Pre-Sessional EAP Students**

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### **Abstract**

A large number of non native speakers (NNS) of English from around the globe attend summer English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses in host countries before going on to further study. Such learners have expectations regarding the improvements that they will make in their speaking skills, not just in an academic context, but also in social contexts. This paper reports on a qualitative study into the kind of contact that such NNS have with native speakers in the community. The findings suggest that expectations are generally not met and our discussion focuses on the ways in which arising issues might be better addressed not only by providers in the host country, but in some regards also by providers in the home country, before students actually leave. Particularly, we argue that when developing listening and speaking skills in the classroom we need to recognise the importance of English as a local language (ELL) and include tasks which contain examples of such language if we are going to adequately equip our learners.

### **Introduction**

A large number of NNS of English go to study a variety of academic courses abroad at universities and colleges in NS countries such as the UK, the USA, Australia, and Canada. For example, university data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (n.d.) in the UK for 2008/2009 shows that 368,970 students on university courses were not from the UK whilst the figure (which includes colleges) in the USA has been put by Vistawide (n.d.) at 672,000. Such students come from all over the world, with a significant proportion from Asia. All such students have studied some English in their home countries before departing, and a number will also take a pre-sessional English for Academic Purposes (EAP) summer course in the host countries before going on to further academic study.

The literature suggests that many students come onto courses in English Native Speaking (NS) countries with an idealistic view of the place they will establish in society, the contact they will have with local people in the community, and the progress they will make in their language skills by being surrounded by the language and culture (Amuzie & Winke, 2009; Horwitz, 1988). Such studies, along with others (Dekeyser, 1991; Berman & Chang, 2001), also point to the importance of spoken English skills for living and studying in a NS country,

even if, as may be likely in EAP, such skills may not be the primary motivation for the students taking a course. Furthermore, a number of other studies suggest that such expectations are not always met (Peirce, 1995; Barron, 2006) which in turn leads to a negative impact on learning and the overall experience abroad.

In addition to the works cited above, there is a rich recent literature on the question of study abroad and student perspectives on it (Henderson, 2009; Iwasaki, 2010; Lee, 2009). Such work is significant for pre-sessional EAP in NS countries where students will, in the main, be spending at least a year studying an academic subject at a university or college in a language which is not their first language whilst also living in the host country. For these learners, speaking in social contexts will be a vital component of their experience. There is also an insightful literature focusing on NS-NNS contact in general (Cook, 1999; Leung et al., 1997; Park, 2007) as well as some relevant work on speech genres (Springer & Collins, 2008; Taguchi, 2008). To date, however, there appears to be no EAP-specific work which asks pre-sessional summer students to reflect on their expectations before arrival and the realities in the first few weeks after. This article is a contribution to addressing this shortfall. It focuses on the thoughts and experiences of a small number of individuals involved on such a programme, and attempts to see the experience through their eyes. Whilst our study is inevitably both university- and country-context specific, the implications of our work are of relevance to EAP providers in both NS and NNS countries. The implications for language pedagogy in terms of shaping and managing expectations, social programmes, course organisation, and above all, a need to embrace ELL, are pertinent issues for the many EAP providers in private language schools, colleges, and universities around the globe.

### *Pre-sessional EAP Courses and Speaking in Social Contexts*

The primary purpose of pre-sessional EAP programmes is to equip students with the language and study skills needed to successfully follow an academic course at foundation, undergraduate, or postgraduate levels in the English language. Frequently, but not always, both the EAP course and the academic course are in an English NS environment, and in such circumstances the importance of living in the host country, and thus speaking in social contexts outside of the classroom is, as we have already suggested, significant. In the UK for example, the British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes (BALEAP) specifically mention as the first point in the course design section of their accreditation handbook, “The course will be designed according to a set of principles based on the needs of students who intend to *live* (our emphasis) and work in an English language academic environment.” (BALEAP, 2007, p. 12). Our study suggests that this problematic and that what has been termed “social networks” (Milroy, 1987) with NS are limited, and that learner expectations are not being met.

### **The Study**

The specific work on speaking within EAP contexts has understandably focused on academic skills such as “giving presentations” or “participating in seminars” in classroom contexts, rather than speaking in social contexts beyond the classroom (Clennell, 1999; Hughes, 2002). In contrast, our study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Do the preconceptions of international students regarding their contact with NS (British) people and culture match the reality they find once in the UK?

2. What kind of opportunities do students have to practice their spoken English outside the classroom? How often, where, and with whom do these opportunities occur, and do the students capitalize on them for maximum exposure to NS language, culture and people?
3. Are international students satisfied with the support the university provides them to create speaking opportunities outside the classroom? Are they satisfied with their experience in the UK overall?

### **Participants and Rationale for Selection**

Rubin's (1975) 'good language learner' was a starting point for choosing the students for the study. Based on the intuitions of one of the researchers, who was also their instructor, those students considered confident enough to want to integrate and create opportunities to communicate with NS were invited to participate. In terms of culture, nationality, and gender, the study aimed for a degree of diversity with only one representative from each country (except Saudi Arabia, from which there were two—one male and one female).

The participants were all studying at an intermediate level (IELTS scores from 5 to 6.5) on a five-week pre-session summer course. All had arrived in the UK over the previous six weeks, and so their memories of what they expected before their departure were still fresh. By the interview stage of the research, all had been in the UK for at least four weeks and had a sense of the extent to which their expectations were being realised. In total, seven students (four men and three women) from Saudi Arabia, Greece, Russia, Brazil, Syria and China participated. The participants provide insights which go beyond their specific contexts (Flick, 1998) and "elements of their stories should reach across ethnic, linguistic, and geographic lines and resonate with border crossers in other parts ..." (Jackson 2008, p. 350). This view is reflected in our chosen methodology.

### **Methodology**

As this research provides insight into the feelings, hopes, and beliefs of students, a qualitative methodology was adopted. This is a more appropriate methodology for addressing such phenomena (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In creating a narrative, an account and a collection of words, the data is "rich, full and real" (Robson 1993, p. 370) and represents "the richness of a world that is socially determined" (Richards 2003, p. 38). Our approach follows Denzin and Lincoln's line of reasoning that such enquiry is inherently "multimethod in focus" (2003, p. 8). This is particularly appropriate in view of the range of research questions and the different kinds of information they seek to obtain. Such a range suggests the need for a combination of qualitative approaches (Mason 2002, p. 60). Thus, the research employs three methods: retrospective essays, diaries, and interviews. Students were asked to produce a short written reflection of how they envisioned the experience to be before coming to the UK. A week's diary recording the use of English outside the classroom aimed to give an indication of what kind of contact, if any, students had with NSs and what opportunities they have to speak English outside the classroom. The interviews then allowed for an elaboration of points with a focus on any mismatches or synergies between these expectations and the reality they then found.

Research ethics, particularly regarding informed consent, were put in place in order to minimize any risk to the participants. Names are not mentioned so that anonymity is upheld,

although nationalities and gender will be referred to by the coding system shown in Table 1, which was agreed upon by the participants.

**Table 1. Nationality and Gender of Participants**

Nationality	Male	Female
Syrian Male	SYM	
Brazilian Female		BF
Saudi Arabian	SAM	SAF
Greek Male	GM	
Chinese		CF
Russian	RM	

Recordings, diaries, essays and transcripts were kept safe and were destroyed or deleted when no longer required. The interviews were transcribed and put together with the diaries and essays so that a long narrative of individual stories could be analysed. The narrative was then coded line by line in order for common themes and concepts to emerge. In line with the recommendations made by Seliger and Shohamy (1989) the data was then organized into more refined groups according to topic so that common points could be identified. The researchers were then able to arrive at a set of categories and concepts that were the most common or, in the researcher's opinion, most relevant to the research questions and the study in general.

### Findings

In this section, we begin with themes that emerge from the data. We then go on to provide a brief summary of what we feel are the "answers" to our research questions.

### Access

The results show that only two of the students had made a British 'friend' (BF and SAM) during their time in the UK and a number of reasons emerged as to why this was the case. Students had expected to meet British people and make British friends by that point in their stay. All the students wished to meet natives and practice speaking with them.

*BF: I thought that as an international student in Manchester I would have contact with people from around the globe, in a sort of mini EU, and after class I would have the opportunity to speak with natives in charming pubs and listening to the beautiful 'Harry Potter' accent while I drink a pint of beer. My idea it was to live as a Britain person as much as possible—really learn their customs and values.*

RM expected to be able to meet NSs in the street and make friends with them. For four of the students (SYM, CF, SAF and RM), the only contact they had with NSs was on the bus, in the shops, in the bank, with teachers, and university staff and technicians. The students understood that it was summertime and that might have accounted for why there were not many British students around the university campus. For this reason, three of the students

(SYM, SAF, GM) hoped that would change once on their academic course. During this study, however, it was clear that the majority of them were dissatisfied or had not had their expectations met.

*BF: The access to local people was nearly inexistent; I just spoke with people from university and some security guards from my accommodation.*

*GM: Before I came in the UK my feelings was completely different with this moment... I hope in September all is different here.*

*SAF: I will try to change this life.*

*SYM: No natives yet ... Why not????? I fear I spend a complete year without getting to know locals.*

There were elements of disappointment regarding contact with natives, expressed by all except SAM. Five of the students (SAF, SAM, CF, BF, SYM, GM) felt that time spent in England had been something of a ‘dream’, a ‘mission’ in their lives that they had wished for a long time, but one they were perhaps not yet fully realizing.

The data points to several reasons for lack of contact the two most important being linguistic difficulties and anxiety. CF reports her encounter with a university IT technician:

*CF: On the way back, I got the call from the assistant of the technician. After I begged his pardon for thousand times we finally hanged up the phone. Unfortunately I still don't understand what he means.*

GM makes an effort to meet natives, managing to strike up a lengthy conversation with some neighbours merely by asking them directions. He also expresses his difficulty in understanding the local accent:

*GM: I'm trying to be part of this "society".... so hard if everyone talk like grandfather without teeth.*

Through an online site for travellers, BF did manage to make some British friends willing to welcome her into their home and to accommodate her and show her around. This was achieved through her own personal effort and led to her attending two “pub quizzes” [1] and a picnic. However, particularly in the pub environment, she and CF (who accompanied her to the pub quiz the first time) found it difficult to communicate:

*BF: For me was still very hard to understand the questions, also they were about England and I couldn't really participate... And the other girl is Rachel but I don't understand her because she has this Manchester accent. I really think that she's trying to communicate with me but...*

*SAM: I don't understand any people talk with me – yeah, again, sorry, pardon?*

Although the students described their difficulty in understanding local accents, four of them (CF, GM, SYM, BF) nevertheless showed a liking for the accents, and a desire either to understand them or even adopt them.

Linguistic problems seem to be closely tied with anxiety and personality issues. SYM, CF, and BF express their difficulty in speaking to natives as a result of their ‘shyness’ or fear of

‘making a mistake’. For SYM, this is the greatest barrier prohibiting him from making British friends.

*SYM: I hesitate to talk to them because English is their first language so I may make some mistakes and this may make me embarrassed, you know. And this is wrong by the way. I have just to speak, even if I make some mistakes, but when the moment comes and I have to do it, I don't.*

Both BF and SYM talked about the pressure of understanding and responding in real time with NS. Often meaning is lost as students realize they cannot ask time and time again for people to repeat or explain.

*BF: I couldn't understand the questions or when I understand it was too late (laughs).*

*SYM: I didn't figure out. I didn't get it. And they're just gone... And you can't just say, I'm international student... People not be so patient, you see.*

On other occasions, a bad experience with a native might lead to further hesitation in future encounters. SYM recalls an English person laughing at him when he spoke, leading him to feel confused about the mistake he may have made but too embarrassed to ask for an explanation. SAF also recounts feeling apprehensive about asking for help in the street, owing to previous negative responses. She also had a bad experience with a bus driver who refused to listen to her. Such negative experiences may increase the feeling of anxiety when approaching NSs. Three students (SYM, SAF, GM) refer to the ‘cold nature’ of British society as a possible reason for lack of contact.

### **Contact with Cultures**

Some of the students had an outdated and perhaps idealistic views of British culture before arriving, mentioning ‘the aristocratic people, like Elizabeth’, how they ‘drink tea’ – the images depicted in Shakespeare, *Moll Flanders* or *Harry Potter*. The ‘traditions’ and the ‘old buildings’ were a matter of curiosity for some, as was the way of life in Britain (BF, SYM, GM, SAF, SAM). SAF had seen and heard so much from books, family and films before coming that she felt ‘at home’ even on arriving at the airport; she felt she ‘knew the culture’ before coming. BF, GM, SAF and SYM expressed strong desires to be ‘a part of this society’, wanting to share their own culture with others whilst learning about the British and the multicultural society of Salford and Manchester. For example:

*SYM: I want to speak English and I want to know more about British society and British customs, I want to get involved in this, you see... Maybe, the UK can succeed in adding something new to my character and way of thinking, or, who knows? I might be the one who adds something new and creative to this open multicultural country, which I really like.*

Without exception expectations had not been met. BF expected ‘to know more about the British people, about the way they do things, the way they speak’, but she did not. CF relates a sense of disappointment after her pub quiz experience with the British, and she did not return the second time:

*CF: Erm, a little boring because not the same as in my imagine. People just take beers, stand there and just talk.*

SYM explains how, in not knowing the local customs and culture, he is less able to make English friends as he does not know what is acceptable:

*SYM: Unfortunately, outside the University community, I am not making friends of native English yet... The problem is that this country has different customs. What is acceptable in my home country is not here, and vice versa, that is why I hesitate in getting to know any locals.*

All students however mentioned opportunities to speak English with students of other nationalities. In almost every case (except SAM who made some international friends through his brother, who had been living in the UK for a year), these were students they met on the university course.

Some clear advantages and disadvantages emerged surrounding the subject of non-native communication. The majority of the students (SYM, SAF, CF, BF, GF) showed an appreciation for the practice they had with other international students, mentioning particularly conversing with other speakers of a similar ability to themselves. For instance, CF believes that she can feel more confident whilst speaking with other NNS of English, as there is less anxiety attached to making mistakes:

*CF: I think if we speak to international students, I think maybe our language level is the same level, and no need to worry about the grammar and they can understand me and give me time to think about it. And NS they think they have the ability to speak very quickly and I can't understand them.*

There is, however, the occasional feeling that practicing English only with other NNSs may have little advantage for them as learners. It was not felt that it would have a negative effect, but it was felt that it might not help them to improve, as illustrated by BF and SYM.

*BF: Bad effect? No, I don't think so but it's that it doesn't make me better.*

*SYM: It's ok, I mean, I practiced speaking English but the listening was not good because their accent was not good.*

A preference for NS was shown by six of the seven students.

Although many students expressed a desire to learn about British culture (GM, SAF, SYM, BF), there was also evidence of an appreciation for learning about other cultures in this multicultural society.

*GM: I have the chance to meet so many people from different cultures...*

*CF: Of course, maybe the NS, that couldn't be better. But come from other countries that would be nice – you can see other cultures.*

Although there was a sense of appreciation regarding the contact with other cultures, there was also a sense of shock on occasions, as the students had expected to encounter culture shock in terms of the British, and not other cultures. BF discusses her initial culture shock with the Chinese:

*BF: I just meet Chinese people on my first week. They were kind and interesting people, but I had a cultural shock not with Britain's but with the Chinese culture.*

RM spends his time practicing with only two nationalities of people: Chinese and Arabic-speakers.

It is perhaps a natural phenomenon for people to gravitate towards those who share the same language, culture or nationality, and this research has done nothing to dispel this tendency. Two of the females (SAF and CF) explicitly mentioned that they feel more comfortable with “their own people” and are glad of such company in a new and foreign environment:

*SAF: I think there are a lot of Arab people here so I connect with the Arab more than other countries...that's good if you have Arabic people with you, you feel comfortable and if you need anything they are every time around you.*

CF is living with all Chinese women and a man from Northern Ireland. When asked if she felt disappointed with the accommodation, she replied: *Not so disappointed because the Chinese make me feel not so lonely in the new environment.* In contrast, it is interesting to note that those students who did not have access to people of their own nationality expressed some sense of loneliness:

*RM: I am missing my friends, the Russian people.*

For many students, despite their best intentions, it is difficult to avoid speakers of their own language for the simple reason that there are so many. This is particularly the case for Arabic and Chinese speakers at the host university. Indeed, for one student (SAF), the fact that there are many Arabic speakers is one of the motivations for studying here. For others, however, they try to avoid speakers of their own language as much as possible, recognizing that this will have a negative effect on their English language:

*SYM: I am worried because I try to avoid speaking Arabic. I don't want to get involved in an Arab society here in the UK; I have to be obliged to speak English all the time, or else my English will not improve. What could I do?*

The data reveals several places where opportunities to practice spoken English might present themselves, and yet, in most cases, very little practice actually occurs. Their accommodations might be considered an ideal place for such practise, yet four out of the seven students live with speakers of their own language or predominantly speakers of their own language (RM, SAF, SAM, CF). As such, their living situation provides them with little or no opportunity to practice English. CF, for example, lives with five Chinese girls and one boy from Northern Ireland, whom she describes as ‘*not so social*’ meaning she has ‘*no chance to speak*’ English in her accommodations. However, even those living in mixed-nationality accommodations reported days spent without any practice or contact with others whatsoever. SYM lives with a British host family, but expressed his disappointment with the lack of contact between him and the others in the house:

*SYM: But you know, the strange thing here, I mean, just hello, hello when coming in. Everyone just gets in his room and makes everything in his room. I mean everything! I don't see them, I don't see them!*

Although this study looks at the opportunities to speak outside the classroom, the data revealed the importance of the classroom and course organization as a springboard for creating such opportunities outside. For most students, particularly those with less confidence, perhaps the main place for them to form friendships is within the classroom. However, due mainly to the cohort of participants, the classroom consisted primarily of other students of



their own language. This is particularly the case for the Arabic speakers (SAM and SAF) who believed that the university should be responsible for changing this.

*SAM: I want, I talked with the course organizer the first time I come here, please change my class because I want er, class all the students there foreign. He told me, I can't, all from Saudi, what can I do? .... For example, don't put all students from Chinese with Chinese or from Saudi in the same class.*

During the summer months, the university organizes cultural trips for the international students on the English language course. Ideally, these would provide students with good opportunities to speak English. Although four of the students (BF, RM, SAF, SAM) mentioned practicing their English a little on these trips, it was generally felt to be minimal, and it was suggested that perhaps the trips were not so geared towards speaking practice. SAM, however, notes how, even on the trips, still there is a separating of nationalities:

*SAF: In these trips, every time with Arabic also. In the bus I talk with Taiwan girls and Chinese girls but if we stop, we make groups. You know, Italian people go together, Chinese go together, and Arabic people go together and I think it's not good.*

Three of the students (GM, BF, SYM) mentioned that cost of activities (transport to and from is provided by the institution free of charge) was an issue for them and often the high prices prevented them from participating. The same three students also mentioned the need for 'social occasions', which would allow them to speak, as opposed to having to focus on an actual sports activity or something else. When asked about the university activities, five of the students mentioned a barbecue and showed their appreciation for this event. It was 'free' and 'not formal' (BF), which allowed them all to attend and mix freely. One of the researchers was also present at this event and noted its success, students of all nationalities mixing, playing football together, eating together and conversing in English together. This is perhaps the kind of 'social' occasion GM and SYM call for.

## Summary

Our summary is discussed according to the three primary research questions.

Do the preconceptions of international students regarding their contact with British people and culture match the reality they find once in the UK?

Most of these students came to the UK expecting to meet and integrate into the British society, and expected to have British friends. However, they often had an outdated or idealistic view of British people and British lifestyle. The reality did not match that which they had expected, and this led to the majority feeling somewhat disappointed or dissatisfied with both their lack of linguistic improvement and lack of contact with native people and culture.

What kind of opportunities do students have to practice their spoken English outside the classroom? How often, where and with whom do these opportunities occur and do the students capitalize on them for maximum exposure to British language, culture and people?

Generally students' only contact with NSs was with their teachers, on the bus, and in the shops and banks. Very few had opportunities to converse with NSs in other ways, and it was

almost impossible for the students to befriend a native British person in the time they had been in the UK. The majority still hoped and expected to have such contact or friendship in the future. Reasons for a lack of contact with NSs included not only a lack of opportunity but also anxiety, pressure and fear of making mistakes. It was generally felt that, even if speaking with other international students may not improve speaking or listening skills, there was less pressure involved and room for mutual understanding and patience, something that was often not the case with NSs.

Are international students satisfied with the support the university provides them with to create speaking opportunities outside the classroom? Are they satisfied with their experience in the UK overall?

There was a general sense of disappointment regarding the experience so far and it was often felt that the institution could do more to help them practice their English outside the classroom. A few students mentioned the cost of the course as a reason why the university should take more responsibility, whereas others realized that it was their own responsibility to create such speaking opportunities. The majority believed that the problem began in the classroom. If the students' nationalities were not mixed within the classroom, they could not form friendships that would allow them to practice their English outside. It was also felt that the student trips could have been chosen more appropriately as social events to encourage talking or activities to introduce British culture, instead of more expensive activities such as ice skating, which they could probably do in their home countries.

### **Implications**

We recognise that on a pre-sessional EAP summer course, it is not going to be easy for students to find opportunities to practice speaking and engage with the local community; they have only been in the country for a few weeks. However, there are a number of issues arising from this study that might assist providers in more adequately equipping students to live in the host country. Furthermore, work in some of these problematic areas can begin on English language programmes in the home country well before students go abroad. In addition, recognising variety and embracing ELLs is increasingly essential everywhere.

### **Shaping and Managing expectations**

We would encourage host institutions and practitioners to provide more information in their publicity material to students, before they leave their home countries, about what to expect in terms of access to NSs (and more specifically the opportunities to “make friends”, in a short period of time) as well as what “British culture” or “American culture” (etc.) might actually mean – notions of “drinking tea” and “Queen’s English” are stereotypes that need to be dispelled. Indeed, new developments in technology would easily allow for former students on such courses to interact with and share ideas with new students. Such measures might go some way to better managing expectations.

### **Social Programmes**

Most pre-sessional EAP courses provide a social programme, which includes transportation to and from places of interest. It is relatively easy for providers to re-evaluate the role of their social programmes and to give more careful consideration to providing opportunities for participants to practice their speaking skills – it appears that it is not the trip *per se* that is

important to students, but the social interactions occurring there. As noted here, a barbecue proved more popular than ice skating or other such outings.

### **Course Organisation**

We recognise that grouping within classes typically needs to focus on language level rather than national or linguistic background. However, most pre-sessional EAP courses include a variety of components, most of which focus on “EAP elements” such as “academic writing”, “listening and note taking”, or “academic reading skills”. Whilst some components focus on the “living in the UK,” such as “everyday listening and speaking”, “general English” and certain types of “project work,” we would argue that within these components, if possible, more consideration needs to be given to mixing up nationalities or linguistic backgrounds. Furthermore, such components as well as programmes in the home country need to address more explicitly some of the issues that students raise in this study – classroom-based activities around topics such as “risk taking”, “making mistakes”, or “conversational gambits and ice breaking.” This might help to better equip students to deal with speaking outside of the classroom. Above all however, such components need to make better use of self-produced authentic listening (leading to speaking) materials, which come from the local community contexts. The primary argument here concerns recognising, embracing and harnessing local language and variety.

### **Embracing ELL**

This study suggests that language pedagogy in EAP (and arguably beyond) needs to acknowledge and more fully embrace the notion of ELL. Against an increasingly widespread recognition of English as an International Language (Jenkins, 2000) or English as a lingua franca (Murata & Jenkins, 2009) and work on the importance of variety (Kirkpatrick, 2007) the comments by participants in this study on appreciation of and yet difficulty with local accents point to the importance of ELL which we would define as geographically specific or unique uses of primarily spoken English by native speakers. In NS host countries, we would encourage EAP providers to gather authentic (spoken) texts from their local communities and to develop materials from this for the relevant “living in the UK” or “living in the USA” (Australia, New Zealand, etc.) components of their programmes. We are not advocating that students should be encouraged to produce local accents and idiomatic expressions, but an explicit recognition of ELL on pre-sessional EAP programmes would go some way to help learners to deal with speaking beyond the classroom. Thus, for example, in the regional context of this study, students needed to know that the comment “Are you all right?” or more precisely “youallright” (said as one word with a particular rise fall intonation pattern) is a friendly local greeting requiring a particular type of response. We recognise that for practitioners working in their NS home country this is more difficult, but we would argue that exposing students to a wide variety of local dialects offers a way forward and that authentic resources from the internet allow for access to such resources. Embracing ELL also involves moving away from outdated and somewhat artificial distinctions between “British and American English”- in truth, there is no such thing, rather there are regional varieties of English in any NS country as well NNS international varieties of the language. An eclectic mix, which embraces local accents, is surely the way forward if we are to better equip learners.

## Conclusion

The first experience for many NNSs studying in any English-speaking host country is a pre-sessional EAP course. It is there that students begin to get a sense as to whether their dreams and aspirations are likely to be met. Clearly, it is important for such learners to be realistic, but there are also responsibilities on the part of programme providers. Arguably, such responsibilities begin with courses in the NS home country of the learner and they certainly extend to the NNS host country. We have pointed to a number of practical suggestions, but above all, we suggest a notion of ELL as a possible framework for better addressing the needs of such learners. By way of conclusion we would call for further research in this important area, in particular, we think it would be helpful to plot the experiences of such learners over a longer period of time. It would be potentially revealing to ask our participants similar questions before they leave home, when they are six months into their academic studies and then again once they have returned home with their qualification.

## Note

[1] A pub quiz is a quiz or trivia contest held in a public house or bar. These events are also called quiz nights or trivia nights and may be held in other settings.

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