

Erasmus+ Address October 28, 2018

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Good morning. It is exciting to see so many of you here because today's seminar, under the auspices of the National Erasmus+ Office, marks the beginning of a new phase in our EAP community's roadmap towards professionalization of English in higher education in Israel. We are brimming with anticipation regarding the future of our profession as we move closer to implementation of the International QA Committee's recommendations and the eventual adoption of the CEFR throughout Israeli institutions of higher learning, with the directive from the MALAG. But "change don't come easy;" and we received ample proof of this over the course of the last three years. So today we welcome this opportunity to set the past aside and focus on exploring how we may go about incorporating the CEFR and an integrative four-skills approach into our standard classroom practice, in place of the previous reading comprehension only model. Simultaneously, we will reflect upon and debate the implications of making the bold but necessary transition from EAP to EPIC: English for Purposes of International Communication. Before we begin, however, on behalf of H-INET, I would like to convey our gratitude to Daniella, Varda and those involved in the MALAG, for our continued dialogue and collaboration, as well as to Kathryn and Einav, from the Erasmus+ Office in Israel, for their support and assistance at all times, not least with the organization of today's event. Lastly, a particularly warm welcome to our esteemed guests, Marjolijn Verspoor and Jos Beleen, who have travelled far to share their expertise with us. They will bring us up to par on state-of-the-art research and methods in language pedagogy in and for the 21st century, and help us come to grips with the intricacies of CEFR alignment, fostering intercultural communication and the principles and processes behind internationalisation at home initiatives.

At a time when the very nature and fabric of the academic endeavor are being revisited the world over in response to the changing landscapes of global learning and the demands of life in the knowledge and information society, why not seize the occasion to reconceptualize the disciplinary contours of our field within Israeli academia, as well as the parameters of our mandate within our respective institutions? What does teaching EAP entail in this day and age, when "academic purposes" are constantly being

questioned and revised? What do we understand by EPIC? Might EPIC indeed not be more appropriate and relevant for our task as language instructors, in light of the dramatic implications for higher education of student expectations, 21st century teaching and learning outcomes, global communication networks, competing market forces, and greater intercultural interaction? We may not like it, but there is no denying that the international marketability of students increases enormously by their being fully experienced in the professional use of English.

We are living in an age of acronyms (EAP, EMI, EPIC) and prefixes, where multi-, pluri-, trans-, co-, cross- and -inter reign supreme in a world that is growing ever smaller and more complicated at the same time. As globalization and technology impact every aspect of our human experience, we have to rethink and redefine what we understand by education, what it means to be a teacher in the 21st century, and what it is like to be a 21st century student in an institution of higher learning in the 21st century. Whether we embrace interdisciplinarity or despair at the mere mention of internationalization is irrelevant. The fact remains that the 21st century demands a new set of transferable soft skills and literacies from both teachers and students so that they may function effectively in increasingly complex, fluid, interconnected, interactive, intercultural and plurilingual multimodal academic and professional contexts.

With English becoming the lingua franca of global and scientific communication, the implications for language teaching are clear: we must prepare our English language learners to navigate effectively across boundaries of time and space, while empowering them to engage with live audiences, in real situations, in English. Thus, instruction should no longer be exclusively frontal, textbook-based, and constrained to time and place. Instead, we should integrate constructivist, collaborative approaches that promote Communication, Collaboration, Critical Thinking and Creativity (the 4 Cs typology), and combine core content with cross-disciplinary knowledge, skills and literacies. Likewise, students must be given access to a wide range of digital tools and provided with opportunities for cross-cultural communication and collaboration on projects that encourage reflection, thinking outside the box, problem-solving and teamwork, the focus being as much on the process as on the product.

As educators and language practitioners, therefore, it is of paramount importance that we actively seek out and take part in continuous professional development initiatives, such as today's seminar, in order to be in an informed position to provide students with the content knowledge, generic, digital and intercultural competences and support systems that will allow them to succeed academically, in the workplace, in social contexts and in global citizenship.

In short, an epic task that requires an epic approach. Against this background, the transition from EAP to EPIC is a necessity. EPIC certainly would not preclude, supersede or undermine EAP, as some fear. Rather, EPIC enhances EAP by adding layers of meaning, content, form and practice to the exercise of scientific communication, opening up a broad spectrum of additional pedagogical insights and methodologies that go beyond English in higher education and beyond the traditional four skills of academic writing, reading, speaking and listening, to encompass both global English needs as well as the wide range of competences, skills and strategies that students require to function successfully in a global world and an economic system in which knowledge is a valuable resource and a marketable commodity. Clearly, it is time to regroup, reappraise and reinvent ourselves, not just for the sake of our professional survival but in order to proactively spearhead educational policies and curricular and institutional reform, as stakeholders with an equal say at the decision table of our academic institutions and policymaking entities. The creation of H-INET and the open channels of communication with MALAG representatives are a case in point.

Finally, I would like to remind everyone to save the date for our H-INET Spring Conference on February 18th. We are very excited to host Diane and Norbert Schmitt, world renowned vocabulary experts, from the University of Nottingham. We will also have the opportunity to consult with them on approaches to teaching vocabulary in higher education, to complement the can-do statements in the CEFR Aligned Framework for English in Higher Education in Israel. Please encourage your colleagues to submit proposals and to attend. We look forward to seeing you all there.

Wishing us all a productive and inspiring day. Thank you.