

A major strategy to improve English:

But what do we all mean by
'English'?

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The University of the South Pacific (USP)

- 12 member countries, speaking 200+ languages
- Highly multilingual classes for face-to-face teaching
- Students studying by distance through e-learning
- English as the de facto medium of instruction
- ALL students and most staff are L2 (or L3) users of English

*“The multi-cultural nature of the staff and student body give USP an exceptional **character**. It is a **quality institution** producing degrees comparable to those awarded by universities in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. Graduates from USP are found in important executive positions throughout the public and private sectors in all member countries and in numerous countries around the world.” (USP website)*



USP at the end of the production line



Mahendra Reddy, Fiji Minister of Education:
(*Fiji Times*, 8 September 2015)

"Fraught with **English grammar and comprehension and sentence structure mistakes** ... We are worried for how long are we to carry these kinds of graduates in our system? ... This person did a primary teacher training certificate, Bachelor of Education, and Postgraduate Diploma in Education and a Masters degree in Education; there are hundreds of them in our school system and ministry. ... **We are bleeding because the various university academia are failing to provide us finished products.**"

(English-medium)

USP: a quality institution

Influence on the way English is taught in schools

ECE, PRIMARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION

ENROLMENT

Entry levels of basic English proficiency

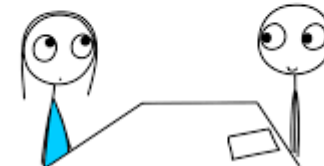
English for Academic Purposes preparation

Strategies to help students learn content through English

Assessment of grammar & punctuation as well as content

Which of these do we mean by 'quality education through English'?

Um ... can we do all of them?

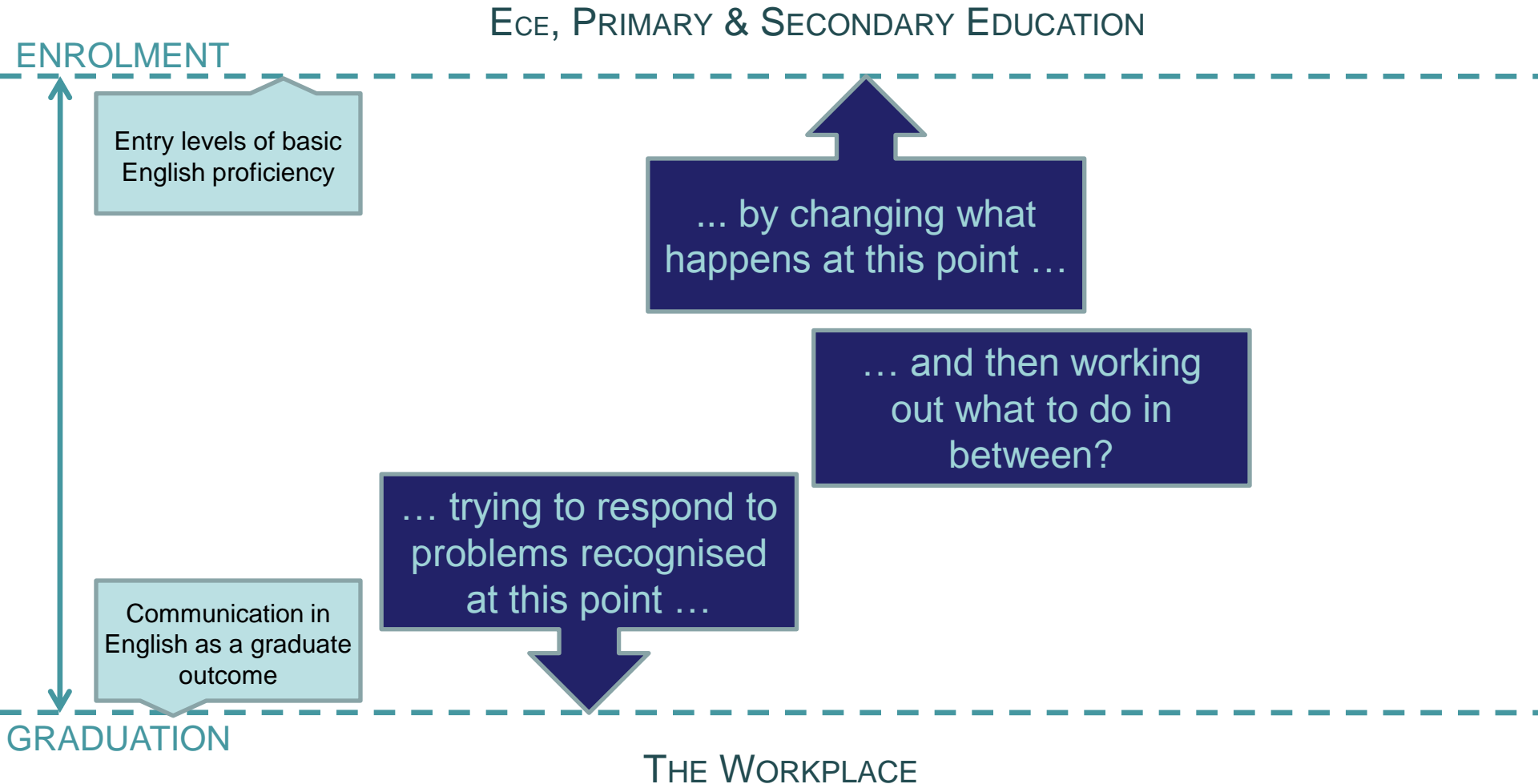


Communication in English as a graduate outcome

GRADUATION

THE WORKPLACE

Should we be ...



Or ...

ECE, PRIMARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION

ENROLMENT

English for Academic
Purposes preparation

... feeding this in much earlier (along
with more appropriate early LP) ...

Strategies to help
students learn content
through English

... so that this becomes easier ...

Assessment of grammar
& punctuation as well as
content

... and this becomes fairer ?

GRADUATION

THE WORKPLACE

Institutional constraints: the English Language entry test

- Previous version has been squeezed out of the system
- Pressure on the new version to:
 - be innovative
 - be quick
 - (make money)
 - discriminate against nobody
 - fix everything!



Institutional constraints: L2 medium of instruction

- English for Academic Purposes course – shouldering the burden and misunderstood
- A model of student support designed for the edges, rather than the mainstream
- The usual academic reluctance from faculties to deal with ‘English’



Institutional constraints: the 4 year pre-service degree for English teachers

University courses	Education	'English' subject	Another subject e.g. History
4 courses <ul style="list-style-type: none">• EAP• Computing/ Library• Ethics• Pacific Worlds	11 courses (including a practicum)	4 Literature courses 4 Language courses <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Intro to Language• Pacific Languages• Structure of English• English in the Pacific	8 courses



Some 'obvious' answers

- Work out what our stand is with regard to an entry test (can we exclude?) / post-entry support (can we provide?)
- Tailor English teaching programmes for teachers (double teaching subject in ELT + Language/Literature)
- Require an entry test & interview for trainee English teachers
- Push hard for changes to language policy in primary and secondary school

Some less obvious answers (Longer-term rewards ...)

A sideways approach to engagement in language issues across the region:

- Pockets of activism within our teacher training programmes
- Inspiring action research amongst our graduates
- Infiltrating the Ministries of Education from multiple directions
- Reassuring USP that language is a worthy area of research
- Introducing innovation – but in response to USP's unique situation rather than attempts to follow others

