**Interview Transcription: EFY Module Instructors**

**IMI08\_EES\_F\_N**

I thank you for taking part in this interview. Would you like to give a brief background about yourself, how you got involved in the foundation year programme? What is your contribution to the programme, your role actually…

MI08 Umm, I have been involved in the Language Pathways since it started…

I and that was when?

MI08 probably about seven years ago, I can’t remember exact at top of my head probably about seven years ago

I umm

MI08 before that there was just support class for students, twelve support class, so I taught that for a year or so, and then moved on and set up as a formal and compulsory module for students who’re under 6.5

I so, that Pathway A and B is it?

MI08 yeah

I okay

MI08 and took that over and that was set up. The module specifications things was set up by different colleague and, at the time and the engineering department, but then I it over to teach it and then, since maybe the last three or four years I haven’t taught on it, but, I still coordinate it

I umm

MI08 umm, although I’ve been away for well, if you add the time together I’m been away for couple of years at the time it has been running so, more recently I’ve less than an idea of the actual day to day student running of it. Its student you know more of a teaching, but you know the material designing that sort of things because I’m more involve the MSc and PhD

I so, what’s your background like, professional qualification, experience in teaching?

MI08 I got a CELTA and MA in Applied Linguistics for language teaching. Umm, I’ve done, so the engineering working in engineering probably about eight or nine years. Umm, within the EAP also done a lot on at the EAS course, so a lot with particularly the listening and speaking. I’ve also worked on with Pre-Sessional discipline-specific on MBA pre-sessional that’s where I started. That’s the first I worked on here on pre-sessionals and began listening and speaking, and EAS listening and speaking and then on various discipline specific. I’ve done a quite a bit of discipline specific mainly engineers now, but in the past it has been management, yeah management and business

I so, it’s mainly in-sessional is it? If it’s language, a…

MI08 both, so my first was doing pre-sessional, from pre-sessional I was doing in-sessional work

I yeah

MI08 as well at some stages

I umm

MI08 and then, yeah moved and was teaching on pre-sessional to helped in running Course B

I uhm

MI08 which had different strands for different disciplines, so umm

I right

MI08 it kind of changed quite a bit

I umm

MI08 but the main thing that I’ve gone through quite has been at the very beginning has been the engineering foundation that kind of fun though my involvement has changed

I so, you mentioned just now your experience with the engineering programme has been like eight to nine years, yeah?

MI08 yeah

I so, what is your role from the beginning until now?

MI08 so the beginning it was just an hourly paid tutor doing the support class. So the support class for foundation I think I might have done one occasionally postgraduate student support class as well then yeah, the foundation engineers. And then, at certain point you know, a more senior tutor at that time I’ve been asked to write a module specification to turn to a formal module and be expanded to number of hours, you know part of their engineering programme

I umm

MI08 because of my involvement in teaching support class so I was asked to take to teach that. Umm, so I then taught, I think we had two tutors from the start because the number of students who needed two for each pathways at that point of time

I umm

MI08 so, I suppose I was in-charge of it. Although, I’ve not written module specification and then, yeah, so I was teaching both pathways for a number of years maybe for four or five years and then I went part time, so I stopped teaching it, but I still coordinate it

I so, your role lately has been to design the syllabus?

MI08 umm, not exactly to design it but up-keeping it and material development for writing exams that sort of thing

I so, you design the exam as well?

MI08 though I would say the last year I haven’t I really hasn’t done, I haven’t been here so it has been a bit of on and off (laughs)

I okay

MI08 since the last batch

I so, the last 2014, 2015 batch they had the language assessment right? So, who were responsible to…

MI08 so, it seems I wasn’t here

I last year EFY batch?

MI08 when I wasn’t, so you had the tutors who were teaching on it, so Zahra and Jackie were teaching and I think then you had normally keeping an eye on it was Sarah Winspear. I think in reality Zahra kept an eye on it or like if there’s a problem, you know John in engineering

I umm

MI08 and then I think in a large degree that’s kind of more for the (6:46?) but you know actually the up-keeping of the material and things like that

I uhm

MI08 I think that hasn’t been developed for a while I’ve been away, so that kind of thing that I’ve been working on it, you know just now and in the summer and trying to get going on that again

I right, so the syllabus which they were using 2014-2015 batch the EFY batch

MI08 yes, that’s the same

I that’s the same and how about this year syllabus?

MI08 yeah, the same syllabus

I okay, and this was largely designed by, your contribution…

MI08 the very original king of module aims and module specification was designed by somebody else, so I inherited that and inherited the assessment, but then what that was week by week basis

I right

MI08 I designed and that has I suppose first couple of years it changed, you know a bit changed but stayed pretty much the same and just moment again looking at changing it you know, up- dating. We needing to wanting to get rid of the key books that they’ve been using. Last year they had a problem with that going out of print and actually now we’ve done, so they had to you know (laughs) find other things to teach it’s a bit of pain for them and also now we've been doing it for a number of years actually. We got the resources and the knowledge to make even more relevant materials. So, I mean we got a lot of materials of our own anyway even that bit I think we can replace without having to use some of those that

I right, so as a module instructor, just now you mentioned that you actually haven’t been teaching, you are not directly involved in the programme, but whenever you teach what would you prefer? Is it like a lecture mode and then may be Q & A at the end, or it is more interactive…

MI08 very interactive with the foundation students

I umm

MI08 because, so very interactive to get them out that, physically out of their seat as well

I umm, right

MI08 and get them to do things in groups quite a bit

I okay

MI08 no, very little in terms of like a lecture

I umm

MI08 I don’t think I would speak more than for five minutes at a time

I okay, so how about Q & A session, how much opportunity that, I mean like you give them…

MI08 at any points of the lesson they could ask question and you know, and the end of explaining a concept I would ask if they had any questions. Then often, I mean people’s personality is different some people prefer not to ask in front of those, so after class is people often you know would stand back and ask a question

I okay

MI08 or even e-mail and in addition to the compulsory hours they had two hours of support class and some people come and ask question through that

I umm, and they also have workshop don’t they? Or is it tutorial?

MI08 workshop for English?

I yeah

MI08 there’s a point where they are working on a language project

I umm

MI08 and part of that the lessons for that two weeks were cancelled and students with different task get on. Then they’ve tutorials to discuss their language project, and with that they were asked to send some, through drafts of their work and also questions that they had so you’re not just correcting their work and telling them what’s wrong but asking them what they would like to know. Although, they actually found that very difficult for most of them, often strongest students found it hard to, the question would often be, ‘tell me what’s wrong with it’ (laughs) for most students I think the strongest students they could (11:04?)

I okay, thank you. Now, the following questions will be directly relevant to my research focus

MI08 umm, yeah

I so as a module instructor, well students are different every year

MI08 yeah

I so, form your experience and observation which students you think they struggle in applying their critical skills in their, more specifically let’s just focus on engineering

MI08 uhm

I so, from your observation which students struggle with critical skills. That’s one and if they struggle what you think it the contributing factors? Is it their language, or is it they did not have enough practice prior to being an EFY student or others, what’s your comment on this?

MI08 umm, I think it answers of what area in which the course has changed a lot over and the time that I worked in it. So, in the early years when I was teaching it in general struggle in critical thinking and other skills were the one with very low IELTS scores. So, at that point students could be accepted with under 5.5

I umm

MI08 so they might have over all IELTS 5.5 or IELTS 4.5 and they may even deep lower than that in certain skills because that’s the overall mark

I umm

MI08 so, they struggle in general and most of them, probably all of them in that category or level went on and failed. So, they just generally not only failed English generally failed in other things. Although this is in general I would imagine that they also struggle particularly with the critical thinking for may not being able to communicate the critical thinking but also for not being able to certainly if they’re presented with an argument in English not being able to understand the argument sufficiently to be able to present it. Umm, others who were a bit better than that weakest category some of them commented that they didn’t read much in their first language. You know, critical thinking isn’t just about reading you know you can, is not just that, but I do think that exposure to reading other people’s ideas and reading other people presenting arguments it may, might make the reading harder so then in English to then to be able to then form enough ideas to form argument and to think about whether you agreed or disagreed with it and develop your own opinion

I umm

MI08 I suppose I’m thinking more about their weaknesses at that time in terms of general who copped and didn’t cope with the course as much as those succeed

I umm

MI08 and but I think and that was definitely linked to language that it depended on

I umm

MI08 which is why then we then changed it that they must have 5.5 minimum in each of the skill not just over all, actually this requirement also became that anyway, so

I so, this 5.5 for every skills is it still 5.5 now?

MI08 yeah

I umm

MI08 yeah, because if they did under we just find they couldn’t get up. Although, you know that was then they were struggling on a language course I do think that would also, I don’t think if you if you have under 5.5, I think even at 5.5 communicating and understanding critical thinking be very difficult

I umm

MI08 but below that I really don’t, beyond to do something very basic. I don’t think they would manage it

I umm. Right following up form this question so do you think students need good command of English, academic English for them to apply critical skills effectively?

MI08 to apply effectively at the level you require at the university

I umm

MI08 yes, I think you do

I umm, why?

MI08 I don’t know. I don’t know exactly at what point you know, I don’t know at what point that actually happens. That probably be different to different people and you can have good English but not critical thinking skills, critical communication skills definitely

I umm

MI08 but I just think if you’ve weak English you’re struggling to communicate even the basics of a message

I umm

MI08 of a factual message

I yeah

MI08 or a descriptive message you can’t expect to communicate a critical message

I umm

MI08 and not with enough nuance of communicating that argument either you come out to cope with the right tone to not to sound that was not enough supported claim things like that

I right. So, because engineering is more of technical English isn’t it?

MI08 umm

I so, do you think it will affect their critical skills as well if they are not good at technical English?

MI08 I think on the foundation course the English that we looking at isn’t massively technical

I umm

MI08 the subjects we cover are engineering topics but actually there’s a lot about sentence structures, forming a paragraph, writing an essay, writing a report which you actually would have on pretty much on any EAP course

I umm

MI08 just presented in a way that it’s accessible for foundation year students and interesting for engineers is not in a way, there’s a difference between English for Specific Purposes

I umm

MI08 which technical English I would call it

I yeah

MI08 and English for Specific Academic Purposes

I yeah

MI08 and I think that’s what we’re aiming for

I yes

MI08 and even within that at foundation level

I yeah

MI08 it’s very basic the technical

I the exposure…

MI08 yeah, the exposure to, the things with engineering topic is just to, it is there we’re talk about posters, talk about lab reports but compared what you’re putting for PhD students or a Master student where it is even more you know. Somebody else who doesn’t have technical background looking in could find it hard to understand to think that level still quite general

I I’ve looked at some of their work and they had this long list of vocabulary, so what’s the purpose of supplying them with the vocabulary

MI08 the vocabulary is came out of, it comes from their, they do that one class a week. They do vocabulary learning and it’s, they’re given a set of words and then during the class they play some games, so it’s quite light hearted lesson

I umm

MI08 and the aim of it is, again a lot of students that we get in their vocabulary is very general and very weak. A lot of, if they’re asked to describe something using, ‘things’ and ‘stuffs’

I umm

MI08 without using a specific what, ‘thing’, what, ‘stuff’ (laughs) without knowing it’s just general English because they haven’t started learning technical English before without knowing, it’s just general English and it’s far too vague to be helpful, so it needs to be more specific to be able to move up to the, to be able to meet the entry requirement and being able to communicate with correct terminology, and the other thing is the words have come from their lecture notes from other modules

I umm

MI08 so hopping it will help them to understand those courses better and also to get them into that mentality of you need to choose to learn words

I umm

MI08 and needing to actually engaged to vocally learning words and seeing how much you can learn when you do

I so

MI08 It’s something I’m bit reviewing at the moment and thinking about at the moment slightly because, just some recent research I’ve been reading about you know, the most common regular words

I high frequency words, yeah

MI08 they not necessarily those words that once come out from their lab notes need not been picked using ANOVA a corpus generating tool or anything they just some interesting words they probably won’t know it, or that’s interesting words that generate they probably should know it

I umm

MI08 so they’ve been subjectively picked, so that have been you know (20:42?) wants to move I’ve looked at that those words I thought actually student would understand most of the words. They’re not complicated words, so mostly high frequency words are not mostly interesting words (laughs). Umm, so I think it hard to get them engaged in the same way, they’ll be interesting of what you could do in the term of how to use it but I think they won’t be engaged in the same way

I umm

MI08 where else not all students but high number percent used to find it really encouraging they come from lecture notes and then you knew which lecture it’s gonna come out the vocabulary you did before and then they hearing it again in the lecture is actually quite ( \_ )

I so repetition really helps, yeah?

MI08 yeah, and it’s like try to help to see the English module helps those other subjects

I umm, from the list how many words are sort of directly related to, is like a verb, lets say it’s a verb, ‘analyse’, we assume every students knows

MI08 yeah

I but then they could perceived in a different way because once they translate it in their own language could be different

MI08 yeah

I the difference could be really different from students from far-east or students from middle- east or from Latin countries, it could be shocking

MI08 yeah

I so, do you incorporate those words because those are the words which appear in their worksheets and also in their exams

MI08 yeah

I so, do you actually explain explicitly like that word as a verb, what are the things that you need to do?

MI08 I can’t entirely remember which words on the sheets to be exact because I said I haven’t been teaching quite a while and I don’t think, I don’t know how many, they once were from their engineering modules

I umm

MI08 all the words come from engineering modules, I can’t remember how many of them are then like analyse, determine, umm ( \_ )

I synthesise?

MI08 yeah, that sort of thing. I can’t remember how many of them and then those words…

I I think they were not there, no

MI08 they may not well be

I do you think it’s important to include them in a language class?

MI08 I do. I think they weren’t on there originally because like as I said I suppose perhaps that wanting to have more of the technical element of what that, that be. In terms of the purpose of what that specifically was. I had put together a number of years ago a little, I think I describe as a set of activities and notes about understanding exams particularly based on Engineering Principles

I yeah, EP, yes

MI08 and I think, I can’t remember the part of that there were list of words you know, the typical words that come out in exams, yeah to ‘determine’, to analyse’, that sort of things

I yeah

MI08 those were in there and those words were explained as part of that

I umm

MI08 but that wasn’t used, that then wasn’t used massively on the actual part before, you know what I mean

I okay

MI08 that was more used in the support class or you know towards the end of the year, if there was space in extra, because it was supporting the other

I yeah

MI08 helping in understanding the other modules you know what I mean

I yeah

MI08 so, I suppose no, they’re not explicitly taught and they’re not ( \_ ), although I do think there was stuff in there but that wasn’t part of the main course. I suppose, yes I do think it’s valuable

I umm

MI08 why it was it not there I think because like I was saying most, lot of the students though were struggling with level 5 or below that. Even though they understood the word, ‘analyse’

I yeah

MI08 they won’t be able to analyse it or be able to communicate the analysis. It’s almost we’re struggling with a far fundamental problem (laughs) to actually try to get them to the words as to them being able to think critically

I yeah

MI08 we’re not thinking critically obviously we're thinking critically, you learn that alongside

I I mean those words are like indicators isn’t it?

MI08 yeah

I I mean if you don’t get that one word for example, the whole question, it’s the key word and then you don't get it, it’ll take up so much of their time

MI08 yeah

I because they fight against the time during exam, in exam condition

MI08 yeah

I so, that’s why I’m asking this question why those kind of words are not included

MI08 yeah, no, I think because it always such fresh course that we’re trying to put so much in. How to include everything?

I yeah

MI08 they were struggling a point the more fundamental point then definitely would benefit. The more advanced student, actually the more advanced student would benefit from it

I umm

MI08 students who’re kind of 6.5

I yeah

MI08 lot of them are actually 6 would have benefitted from it. The weaker ones I think at that point they were more pressing needs. If I had more time you know, if we had more lessons or something you know that would be great but within the constraints of the number of hours we had

I umm

MI08 I think there were more urgent things that needed work on which is why that sort of thing moved to in a support class you could look at it. I think also there’s overlap between the way the whole course was set up

I yeah

MI08 it was a language module you think of study skills module

I umm

MI08 although you need the language to communicate critical thinking is that, ‘who does what’, if you know what I mean

I umm

MI08 and I think understanding those words to certain degree, everybody needs to understand those words, so, I think it did come up to certain degree in the study skills

I so, do they have a separate module for study skills?

MI08 yeah

I do they have a separate module for study skills?

MI08 yeah, they have

I what, the whole batch the EFY…

MI08 yeah, yeah, what is it call

I Routes to Success?

MI08 yeah, yeah

I right, but I think Routes to Success is a, I mean when you talk about academic skills it’s take a very few percentage of the whole proportion of the…

MI08 yeah

I umm, oh! That’s what you meant by RTS the Routes to Success

MI08 Routes to Success, they…

I they write a reflective report and those kind of thing

MI08 yeah, yeah, and I think it includes critical thinking as part of it

I umm

MI08 I suppose with module specification the emphasis is slightly more on the language, although, obviously then actually understanding words do then easily involved other language. So, perhaps the current cohort students would benefit more having those words added in

I who would benefit, sorry?

MI08 the current cohort students

I yeah

MI08 would benefit from the kind of words you’re saying

I yes

MI08 where else the original students I think may be, yeah they had, it was, yeah that was (29:08 judgemental?) problem, but if you were slightly and I think

I all those vocabulary directly to critical skills I think it might, I’m not sure

MI08 yeah

I I’m just saying

MI08 yeah probably it’s slightly a higher band

I because, when I interviewed the students. I interviewed them three times, beginning of their semester two, I didn’t interview them earlier because they’re already grappling with the new system and all that. So, I started at the beginning of semester when they’ve settled down and then I interviewed them immediately after their exam there’s where I go in-put from them about words

MI08 yeah

I and then the third one, they already moved on to their undergraduate programme and I’m trying to recap if their views and understanding of critical thinking skills have changed

MI08 yeah

I if, how EFY programme helped them to cope with the programme they’re in now

MI08 yeah

I so, based on what the student said that’s what I’m saying

MI08 yeah, yeah

I this is another question, so in your opinion if students lack critical thinking skills is it a thinking problem or a language problem?

MI08 I think the students at the level, I think the students of the level which I see them

I yeah, and you’re talking about foundation year, yeah?

MI08 yeah, foundation year at the level I was seeing them, so, you know when they were 5.5 level and some and some below and some above

I yep

MI08 then I would say, it’s hard to find out whether it’s a language or a thinking problem because the language blocked it too much to ever work out which one that was, and then beyond that for some students it say not understanding what critical thinking is. But, I think in general it often more understanding how it should be communicated. I think most people, I do think most students ( \_ ) it’s hard to say because the language in critical thinking closely linked

I umm

MI08 you can’t know what’s somebody’s head unless they communicate it and then you know that’s the language thing and form the answer for that thinking

I umm, so it’s both verbal and written form, yeah?

MI08 yeah

I to communicate

MI08 yeah, but if they didn’t have the language you can’t even determine, quite begin to determine whether they, the language is the first barrier

I yeah

MI08 and then beyond that I think

I okay, so language does play a fundamental role to determine…

MI08 certainly at that very low level when you’ve students around 4 or even 5, IELTS students 4.5, 5, if they can’t really communicate like I said basic scripted message you’re not gonna get out from them

I umm, right. So, in your opinion do you think maturity and experience help students to be more critical? Like mature students for example, do you think they’re more critical than the young learners because of their experience, or it doesn’t matter

MI08 I haven’t taught on engineering foundation, we didn’t have any mature students, so, it’s hard for me to say ( \_ ) yeah, I wouldn’t be able to say, in general you would guess that a mature student should have more experience to put into it

I umm

MI08 but equally sometimes I think mature students could also be a bit stuck in their way of thinking and maybe then less flexible to be being taught, you know

I umm

MI08 so, I think it can either they can be some of the best or they can almost you couldn’t, you’d be much harder to move them out of it

I umm

MI08 to improve

I umm

MI08 but I don’t have the Maths, you know that thinking of people from variety of different concepts not all of them engineers, so yeah, that wouldn’t be the fairest comparison within the foundation engineering

I umm, okay right. So, this is the final question, so as a module instructor in the engineering foundation year how would you define critical thinking skills?

MI08 critical thinking skills is the ( \_ ) ability to show that you can ( \_ ) look at a situation or an argument problem understand the range of different views about that problem and then move beyond just understanding them to actually forming your own coherent arguments about either arguments or problem or something like that by weighing up the strength and weaknesses of other positions

I uhm, so this definition for general or for engineering studies?

MI08 umm, I suppose that’s where I would find it hard to think of top of my head

I umm

MI08 if I was think about definition of critical thinking it would take me long like to think about that

I yeah

MI08 because, particularly of then if I’m trying to think about whether I’m talking about specifically for engineering or I’m thinking about it more generally

I umm, if it’s engineering what would you say, for the engineers

MI08 well again even now because I’m thinking more about my postgraduate engineers, it even probably even depend on different types of engineers

I umm

MI08 because even with engineering within engineering, I think it looks different within different types of engineers

I yeah

MI08 I could see that critical thinking is different, so I suppose maybe I started to think about critical thinking in general (laughs)

I right

MI08 then I moved on to definition thinking of a specific student at the time we talked about critical English

I yeah

MI08 I start to think about the problem

I right

MI08 and then having to, you know they’ve a problem and then they need to move towards the solution

I alright

MI08 but then I’m mixing it with another student who has more than an argumentative base, umm ( \_ )

I so this this focused on problem solving?

MI08 yeah, but again this depend on the type of engineer. I think I suppose what I’m trying to say, you can’t be exact of what is critical thinking

I no, of course there’s no specific answer to define or specific way to define it

MI08 yeah

I but, how the tutor or the module instructor perceives or what she or he understands by critical thinking skills based on my reading it says it sort of influence

MI08 yeah, definitely

I his pedagogical choices

MI08 yes, yeah definitely

I so we think differently so we applied it differently, that’s why I wanted to know what’s your…

MI08 I think in a term of, some sort of weighing up other views or other things and not just weighing them up but then going somewhere with it yourself

I umm

MI08 weighing them up to some sort of conclusion involving describing one view to another view and another view

I so, thank you very much for taking part in this interview, I really appreciate that, every word you said is very important to me