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The Ethics of EAP Practices. Transformers or robots in disguise?

This talk places ethics at the centre of EAP practices. Using case study examples from my own context, I will suggest that as EAP practitioners we face a series of ethical dilemmas over how and where we position ourselves and our work. These dilemmas could be presented as a binary choice – for example assimilation or transformation; EGAP or ESAP – but the reality is far more blurred than this. The context in which each of us works influences the enactment of our practice and therefore either limits or adds to the affordances available to us. Through an exploration of a range of the reflexive decisions we therefore need to make in, through and about our practice, I will question the current doxas around the ideal in EAP and ask how far away from this ideal the reality is for the majority of practitioners. I will then consider how we can work within our own contexts to shift practices further towards an ideal for our profession and for our students. This involves developing a personal ethos as well as one for the profession. I draw on the posthuman concept of ‘affirmative ethics’ (Braidotti, 2006) and the feminist ‘ethics of responsibility’ (Lindermann, 2019), to suggest we have a responsibility to ourselves and to others to engage in reflexive practice and scholarship. Without this principled and scholarly ethos we are more likely to remain seen as a ‘fixer’ of language, ‘a technician, who is able to execute pedagogic technique competently...[with] no need to consider theory or research as a basis for practice’ (Ding & Bruce, 2017:9), a robot with no agency. I conclude, therefore, with the argument that it is through a pragmatic, but, importantly, ethical approach to our practice that we can become transformative practitioners, having influence in our professional contexts and pushing the boundaries of our discipline.

References:

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Ding, A., and Bruce, I. (2017). *The English for academic purposes practitioner: Operating on the edge of academia*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lindermann, H. (2019). *An Invitation to Feminist Ethics*. Oxford Scholarship Online.