

Carleton Papers

in

Applied Language Studies

Volume XXIII, 2006

Special Edition:

*A Monograph on English for Academic Purposes in Canadian
Universities*

SLALS

*School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies
Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5B6*

A Special Edition of Carleton Papers in Applied Language Studies:
A Monograph on English for Academic Purposes in Canadian universities
Volume XXIII, 2006

Editors: Janna Fox and Christine Doe

Carleton Papers in Applied Language Studies may be obtained from:

School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies
Carleton University
1125 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, Ontario
K1S 5B6 Canada

ISSN 0824-7714

Table of Contents

Preface	i
Costs and Benefits: English For Academic Purposes Instruction in Canadian Universities <i>Janna Fox, Liying Cheng, Robert Berman, Xiaomei Song and Johanne Myles</i>	
Background	
<i>Predicting Academic Performance</i>	2
<i>EAP Instruction: Preparing Students for the Academy</i>	8
<i>Historical Trends and Needs Analysis</i>	10
<i>Faculty Perceptions</i>	11
<i>Student Perceptions</i>	14
<i>Case Studies</i>	19
<i>Gaining Language Proficiency and Confidence: Developing Effective Strategies to Improve L2 Student Performance</i>	31
Methodology	
<i>Participants and instruments</i>	35
<i>Data collection</i>	36
<i>Analysis</i>	37
Results And Discussion	
1) <i>Learning and coping strategies</i>	39
2) <i>Support</i>	48
3) <i>Academic Motivation</i>	58
4) <i>Language and Academic Background</i>	63
5) <i>Personal Information</i>	64
6) <i>Individual Field of Study</i>	65
7) <i>EAP and English Language Support</i>	69
Outcomes of Phase 1: Questionnaire and Model Development.....	83
Conclusion.....	87
References.....	89
Appendix I	
<i>Questions asked by researchers in Semi-Structured Interviews with L2 students</i>	103
Appendix II	
<i>Comments taken from the interview data that led to the identification of the seven final categories</i>	104

Editorial Policy

The purpose of the *Carleton Papers in Applied Language Studies (CPALS)* is to publish work in progress by Carleton faculty and students, as well as colleagues who share our interest in Applied Language Studies and Educational Linguistics. Of particular interest are papers on communicative language teaching, syllabus design, French immersion, second language learning and acquisition, computer assisted language learning, linguistic development in the first language, literacy and writing development, discourse analysis, and applied sociolinguistics.

Articles selected for publication are not copyrighted by *CPALS*. Contributors are free to offer their work to other journals or to publish separately. Our aim is to share provisional results of ongoing research, in the hope of receiving feedback and thus contributing to a dialogue between people working in the same field. It is our hope, then, that *CPALS* will serve as a forum for the exchange of ideas among people working in Applied Language Studies at Carleton University and in similar Centres around the world.

Subscriptions

CPALS is exchanged for Working Papers in Applied Linguistics published by other Centres. Otherwise, *CPALS* is available by subscription.

Subscription Price

\$10.00 Canadian funds per issue for orders within Canada
(add 7% for GST – R – 118838937)

\$10.00 U.S. funds per issue for orders outside of Canada
Postage is included in the subscription price.

Address for Correspondence and Subscriptions

Carleton Papers in Applied Language Studies
Room 215 Paterson Hall
Carleton University
1125 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa, Ontario
K1S 5B6 CANADA

Costs and Benefits: English for Academic Purposes Instruction in Canadian Universities

Preface

This volume of CPALS focuses on the important topic of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) instruction in Canadian universities. As most universities in Canada are engaged in aggressive programs of internationalization, and Canadian immigration has increasingly drawn from language groups other than English, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of students using English as a second language (L2) in undergraduate university programs. Increased internationalization and Canadian immigration over the past 20 years have resulted in:

- changes in policies regarding language admission requirements;
- heightened concern over the use of language proficiency testing in the selection of students for university admission; and
- a proliferation of language support programs that are either available to or required of second language (L2) students as part of the undergraduate admission process.

What language support programs share is their overall intent: to prepare L2 students to use English at the university level and to help with the students' transition to both general academic and disciplinary-specific culture. However, a review of literature regarding English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programs across Canada (Berman, 2002; Cheng and Myles, 2002; Fox, 2004) reveals little consensus on fundamental approaches, designs or procedures within these programs and an absence of research to document their effectiveness. Within Canada (and elsewhere) there is little research regarding specific EAP program outcomes at the university level (Berman, 2002; Cheng & Myles, 2002; Fox, 2004) or how much time is required to support L2 students with such programs, while they adjust to the demands of academic study (see Fox, 2005, for one such example). Therefore, research in this area is of critical importance at this time (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002; Jordan, 1997) given the increasing number of L2 students in undergraduate programs, the varying nature of EAP approaches, and the lack of large-scale or comprehensive studies regarding the key causal factors that support the successful transition of L2 students to undergraduate study in Canada. There is an urgent need identified in the literature to research this transition -- the factors that affect it and the role of EAP support (Atkinson, 1999; Byram, 1989; Fox, 2005; Kramsch, 1991; Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996). A better understanding of both the factors that contribute to success (or failure)

will allow program coordinators and teachers to develop more appropriate and effective pedagogical strategies, increase *benefits* and reduce *costs* (Banerjee, 2004). Here cost is viewed not only as an individual concern which may entail time, money and self-esteem, but also as an institutional concern. When students fail, they certainly suffer at an individual level, but so too do the institutions who wasted funding and space in programs and the allocation of institutional resources. When language support programs (e.g. English as a Second Language (ESL), EAP, English for Specific Purposes (ESP)) are inefficient or ineffective, students may take more time than necessary to graduate, or worse still, may drop out after repeated failures. Thus, such ineffective programs result in considerable cost to both the students who enrol in them and the institutions that fund them. In this volume of CPALS we report on the initial stage of a two-stage study that was designed to investigate the costs and benefits of EAP language support programs in Canadian universities. Specifically, the study was designed to:

- 1) identify key factors influencing the academic transition or acculturation process of L2 undergraduate students in Canadian university programs, and
- 2) examine the role that EAP and other forms of language support play in that process.

This volume begins with a literature review of factors that influence L2 (second language) English students' academic acculturation and performance. Data for stage one of the study were drawn from two sources. First, interviews were conducted with L2 students enrolled in ESL, EAP and first-year university programs¹ at three Canadian universities. Simultaneously, interviews were undertaken with language teachers and discipline-specific professors at the three universities. These data were analysed and their results discussed here. Factors identified in the literature review and those emerging from the analysis of the interview data were combined in order to model the L2 academic acculturation process and to specify and design questionnaires for circulation in stage two of the study. These questionnaires have been completed by L2 students and

¹ ESL courses are defined here as having a general focus on language to meet a broad range of interests. EAP courses, on the other hand, have the explicit purpose of preparing students to engage in academic study at university. ESP courses, a sub-set of EAP, focus on the development of language within a specific discipline, for example, English for engineering, English for business, etc.

language program coordinators in universities across Canada. In phase two of the study, the data from the questionnaires will be analysed to confirm the model of the L2 academic acculturation process that has been identified as the outcome of stage one and to further explore the role of EAP support in that process.

EAP programs, especially those that claim to prepare L2 students for their discipline-specific university courses, are currently being challenged on a number of fronts. According to Swales, Barks, Ostermann and Simpson (2001), there are several emerging dilemmas in the field. On the one hand, for several years EAP researchers have either been conducting studies involving questionnaire-style *needs assessments* (Cheng, Myles & Curtis, 2004; Berman & Cheng, 2001) to highlight the academic skills and strategies necessary for academic study, or they have engaged in *genre analyses*, which have primarily been concerned with the deconstruction of generalizable features of academic texts (Hewings, 2001; Hyon, 1996; Hyland, 2000, Swales, 1990). The pedagogical value and application of these studies has been questioned by other researchers, particularly those associated with the “new rhetorical” school (see, for example, Freedman, 1999; Freedman & Medway, 1994), who argue that texts, spoken and written, are embedded in specific contexts of use, and that teaching should be informed by the roles genres play and the actions they perform in these context-situated (discipline-specific) academic and professional contexts (Casanave, 2002; Prior, 1998). Through ethnographic research, the latter group argue that disciplinary acculturation is an ambiguous process whereby L2 students and faculty negotiate toward creating and recreating their identities, their practices and their communities of practice in a wide range of settings, ranging from writing classes (Hansen, 2000; Rodby, 1999), to group project meetings (Leki, 2001) and to personal encounters (Belcher, 1994). Thus, they argue EAP courses which focus on de-contextualized, discipline-general academic competence of limited or no value to students who must adjust to the academic demands of discipline-specific academic culture (Hansen, 2000).

A second challenge comes from educators and practitioners who argue that the EAP movement has not been sufficiently critical of the political and economic agendas that have influenced trends in the field. Some argue that EAP approaches have too readily accepted dominant institutional practices and perceptions (Benesch, 2001). They point out, for example, that what is considered *plagiarism* by EAP teachers and the dominant academic culture that they represent, devalues L2 students’ academic and professional experiences in their native countries (Pennycok, 1996). Others note that some disciplinary faculty refuse to accept topics that would be directly relevant to those same countries (Swales, et. al, 2001).

Finally, there is considerable tension within the field of EAP instruction itself regarding appropriate models of instruction. Some argue for sustained content approaches that have as their goal the development of “critical thinking” or “higher order thinking skills” along with academic language competence. Others argue that the focus should remain on thematic units, which develop both language competence and compensatory academic strategies and skills. Still others define themselves as EAP programs but focus on literature as the basis of instruction and have as their exit criteria successful performance on formal essay tests. Conflict within the field of EAP is occurring at a time when Canadian universities are increasingly focused on program accountability and measurable outcomes. This focus on accountability has created additional pressure on EAP programs, which have not consistently amassed evidence of their effectiveness and have no coherent body of research to draw on as sources of support.

Although it is not within the scope of this research to discuss these conflicts further, they attest to the need for increased clarity with regard to factors that directly contribute to the successful academic acculturation and performance of L2 students in Canadian universities, particularly the factors that arise as a result of differences in EAP program models. In this volume of CPALs we report on the first stage of our study which investigated what L2 students and program coordinators identified as the key factors that make a difference in the success of L2 students in Canadian universities, including those arising from EAP instruction. Such research has the potential to clarify the role these factors play in the L2 academic acculturation process and may begin to address current conflicts in the field of EAP instruction.

Janna Fox