From General ESL to EAP: A Fall Leap

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Abstract. This paper is based on the presentation by the same name given in Lawrence, KS on December 7, 2018 as part of the Building Bridges for English Language Centers conference. The presenters were two instructors, Diane Taveggia and Parul Sood, who taught EAP courses for the first time after teaching general ESL classes for many years at the Applied English Center (AEC) at the University of Kansas (KU). The presentation focused on the skills taught in two English for Academic Purposes courses - EAP 101 taught by Parul Sood and EAP 102 taught by Diane Taveggia in the Academic Accelerator Program at KU. This paper expands upon the difference between the University's IEP and the Academic Accelerator Program as well as the challenges of the transition experienced by the two instructors who made the leap from ESL to EAP for the first time.

The Intensive English Program and Academic Accelerator Program

At the University of Kansas (KU), there are two programs typically offered to international students who have not yet met the University's ESL entrance requirement: the Intensive English Program (IEP) and Academic Accelerator Program (AAP). While the IEP is a more traditional ESL program with five levels based on proficiency, the AAP is a pathway program where students take General Education courses along with EAP courses to satisfy the University's ESL requirements.

Intensive English Program

In the IEP, there are five levels. Once a student is in a high intermediate (level 4) class or advanced (level 5) class, the student can also take General Education courses.[1] Earning a grade of an A or a B is an automatic pass to the next level, but students can take the proficiency test at the end of the semester to see if they can move beyond the next level. There are two main classes in the curriculum: Reading/Writing/Grammar (RWG) and Listening/Speaking/Grammar (LSG). In addition to the main RWG and LSG classes, support classes for levels 1, 2, and 3 are also

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[1] Level 4 high intermediate corresponds to a CEFR level of B1+/B2 and level 5 advanced refers to B2/B2+.

offered. Nine credits of level 4-5 classes count toward graduation but do not get factored into the student's GPA.

Academic Accelerator Program at the University of Kansas

Students who have been accepted to the AAP and have a proficiency level of 4 or 5 can enter the pathway program. The first year in the AAP allows students to complete a three-semester term before entering their sophomore year. Students are co-enrolled in English language classes and General Education classes within the same semester. (Some of the General Education classes are sheltered, in that they are created only for AAP students and other General Education courses are not sheltered. No English language faculty sit in on the sheltered courses, but some English language faculty teach UNIV, which is a course that introduces university life to AAP students.) The English courses are taught only by Applied English Center (AEC) faculty. There are three options for students who enter the Academic Accelerator Program: Integrated Accelerator Program (IAP), Academic Accelerator Program 2 (AAP 2), and Academic Accelerator Program 3 (AAP 3). Only those students enrolled in AAP 2 and AAP 3 take English classes along with General Education courses. Those in AAP 2 will take English their first semester only, while those enrolled in AAP 3 will take English classes their first two semesters[2].

English in AAP 2. In their first semester of AAP 2, students enroll in two EAP courses, EAP 102 and EAP 122. EAP 102 is a three-hour, integrated skills course and EAP 122 is a one-hour academic grammar course. Students in EAP 102 and EAP 122 are co-enrolled in an American Studies course and Environmental Studies course. No domestic students are enrolled in these courses. The language and activities in EAP 102 are geared for American Studies, while the grammar taught in EAP 122 is relevant to Environmental Studies. Since these courses are related, they are referred to as paired or "sister" courses.

English in AAP 3. Students enrolled in AAP 3 take EAP 101, EAP 111, and EAP 121 along with General Education courses. EAP 101 is a six-credit integrated skills course while EAP 111 is a one-credit class focusing on information literacy. EAP 121 is a two-credit grammar course that is associated with environmental studies, a course AAP students also take. After successful completion of their first semester, students in the AAP 3 track will typically take the same English courses as those in the AAP 2 track.

The IEP and AAP: A Comparison

The ultimate goal of the IEP and AAP is to prepare students to be academically ready for coursework at a university. In all general ESL courses in the IEP, instruction targets learners' thoughts, ideas, and opinions as input and new grammar and vocabulary is dealt with as it arises within the context of textbooks adapted for ESL learners. Most of the same skills are taught in EAP courses: how to read and process information from a textbook, how to think critically about the information, and how to evaluate and apply discipline specific concepts in the essays or oral presentations. A key difference in EAP, however, is that we teach these skills in an authentic

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[2] For more information about the non-English language components of the Academic Accelerator Program at the University of Kansas go to: https://accelerator.ku.edu/undergraduate/.

academic context, using texts from General Education classes. Table 1 below further summarizes some of the differences between the IEP and AAP programs at KU.

Table 1

A Comparison between the Intensive English Program and Academic Accelerator Program

Intensive English Program	Academic Accelerator Program
General ESL Courses	EAP Courses and General Education Courses
Focus on English language development	English as an enabling skill for reconstructing and deconstructing academic content from specific disciplines
Levels 1-5	*AAP 3*: Two terms of English language + General Education courses
General Education courses with Levels 4 & 5	*AAP 2*: One term of English language + General Education courses *IAP*: Only General Education courses
Course grade of A or B = automatic pass to next level	One year of AAP = Sophomore
Course grade of C requires a semester-final proficiency test score to progress to next level	Course grade of D or lower results in a student required to repeat the class
Nine credits of level 4-5 ESL classes count toward graduation for some majors but do not get factored into the student's GPA	EAP courses contribute to a student's GPA Students earn credits toward their graduation requirements (as elective credit)
Main classes – Combined Skills with Grammar: Reading/Writing/Grammar and Listening/Speaking/Grammar	EAP courses integrate the 4-skills
Support courses for Levels 1/2/3	Sister courses with American Studies and Environmental Studies

English for General and Specific Academic Purposes

EAP is often considered as one of the branches of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) which is further divided into English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) and English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) (Martin, 2014). EGAP deals with the language skills and the broader academic skills common across disciplines, whereas ESAP is concerned with skills specific to a discipline. It emphasizes the language needed for that particular academic subject together with its disciplinary text conventions. Both include language structure, jargon, subject-

related skills, and appropriate academic conventions. EAP 101 falls under the umbrella of EGAP because it is a mixed discipline course not paired with General Education courses the students are enrolled in. EAP 102 falls under ESAP and partners with an American Studies course. EAP 102 uses the same textbooks as the American Studies course and involves clear collaboration with the American Studies class regarding syllabus, material selection, and assessment.

Both EAP courses are content-, skills-, and language-driven. The general teaching and learning strategy that we used in EAP is AURC – *A*ccess, *U*nderstand, *R*ecreate and *C*ritically think about academic content (Berardo & Smith Herrod 2015, pp. 20-24). Understanding hierarchical organization of texts, learning discipline-specific jargon along with general academic vocabulary and collocations, and using visual representations are some of the activities used to access and understand text. In order to show others that they understand the content, students re-create it by taking notes, paraphrasing, and summarizing main ideas. They also write essays or give presentations. The final step is to critically think about what they have learned in class by reflecting on their learning process, applying the concept in a different situation, or even comparing and contrasting it with other concepts.

EAP 101

This past year, I (Sood) had an opportunity to teach in the EAP program for the first time. It was a new world to me and not knowing what to expect was the main reason for my initial apprehension. Phillip Martin in his paper titled Teachers in Transition: The Road to EAP (n.d.) mentions this anxiety and proposes strategies for overcoming it. "There is clearly a transitional process which needs to be undertaken by the [EAP] teacher in terms of how he or she adapts their role in the classroom and their teaching methods, and takes into account highly specific student needs and expectations" (p. 287). This is particularly interesting to me as a new instructor to EAP because it appears that I clearly had to adapt my teaching role with the knowledge and materials required to teach an EAP course.

EAP 101 is based on the traditional interdisciplinary Liberal Arts education which aims to prepare students for further research or professional work in their specific field of study. One of the learning objectives of this class was to foster individual investigation of disciplinary differences. The book for the course consists of a collection of first-year textbook chapters from various disciplines; communication studies, biology, psychology, economics, and western civilization. The academic skills we focused on were strategic reading strategies, listening to lectures, note taking, writing research papers, giving oral presentations, and reference skills. We worked on understanding hierarchical organization of the textbooks and textbook chapters, understanding visuals, and outlining the key ideas of the text. As part of understanding hierarchical organization, students learned that the section headings, the bold words, and the questions in the margins show the students the words and topics they need to study because those topics are important as per the author. Also, this pedagogy helped them to see the connection between the various sections of a chapter. Finally, since the assignments in EAP 101 relied heavily on research and reference skills, we emphasized how to navigate library databases to find and evaluate sources in order to produce a research paper. There was no explicit grammar

instruction for the research papers but we did use common grammar errors for some remedial grammar instruction after the assignment was turned in.

In EAP, although there was a discussion of language points, I learned that I have to shift the focus to academic skills and make instruction subject oriented. Reading hierarchically, understanding jargon, making oral presentations, and developing study skills were some specific academic skills I taught in EAP 101. After we finished each unit, a test was given to demonstrate whether the students could use English words and phrases common in that field of study. Because my students did not do well on the first test, we decided that instead of using a study guide to study for the next test, students would learn how to make a list of possible questions for the test. Questioning is a study skill that helps students to understand, recreate, and even think critically about what they are reading. We had a discussion about different test question formats, different quizzes, materials, and activities that were previously done in class. As a result, students learned to form questions that allowed them to critically think and apply the concepts. A question written by one of the students was "Can you explain the science experiment you did in class and using that as an example, explain the seven steps of scientific approach?" This kind of question would be in comparison to a direct definition question such as: "What are seven steps of the scientific approach listed in the book?" I consider the first question as an achievement for me as well as my students because it shows the student is using English in a discipline-specific way by asking for an explanation of an experiment and the method or approach that was used.

Specialized Knowledge

One of the biggest challenges that I faced was developing the specialized knowledge and materials that are needed to teach English for a specific discipline. Because we are not content area specialists, linguistic expression of subject matter can be somewhat precarious. Teacher's knowledge of academic texts and its influence on language use in class is the key characteristic of EAP distinguishing it from general ESL. Campion (2016) conducted a series of semi-structured interviews at the University of Nottingham to investigate the experience of six teachers who had made the transition from teaching English for general purposes to EAP, focusing on the challenges they encountered in terms of training, and their experience in overcoming those challenges. In this study, Campion found, as in my own case, that the greatest challenge that teachers face when they first start to teach EAP was "developing the specialized knowledge" (p.64). A major step in my learning process, too, was to grasp the concepts, academic conventions, and the textbook structures of different disciplines.

In EAP 101, I used three textbook chapters, each from a different discipline (communication studies, biology and economics) to teach academic skills, words and phrases in those disciplines. I had to impart both subject knowledge and language competence at the same time, so I had to prepare myself in advance by doing some subject-related research and reading. For example, the textbook chapter had only listed the series of steps followed by scientific investigators to answer specific questions about the natural world without giving any specific example. In order to give my students a practical example of the steps involved in the scientific method used in biology, I decided to do an experiment in class (during the fall semester) to answer the question about something they notice every day, "Why do green leaves change color

in fall?" Students were divided in three groups, each with a number of leaves that had the same color (green, yellow & red). To conduct this experiment successfully in class, I had to read online articles myself to understand the scientific reason behind the change in color of the leaves, as well as the biological jargon. In this process, I reviewed what I had learned as a university freshman and even learned some new concepts. All in all, I learned that willingness to engage with the first-year university material was an important step in becoming a successful EAP teacher. In the absence of such willingness, it can be challenging to teach academic English and study skills especially with authentic material.

EAP 102

When I, Taveggia, was assigned EAP 102, I knew that the approach was different from what I was accustomed to in the IEP, but I was not exactly sure how it differed. Thus, my first step was to comb through a mass of material on Blackboard, a learning management system, to determine the overarching goals of the course (e.g., using AURC to approach authentic texts), discover types of activities that others had found to work well (e.g., peer-to-peer teaching activities), and get my copy of the textbook used the American Studies (AMS 100) course because EAP 102 is paired with American Studies.

Different sections of AMS 100 at the University use various texts chosen by individual instructors, but those sections which partner with EAP 102 classes had to adopt the same textbook so that EAP 102 instructors could develop a sense of what the course offers. Currently, AMS 100 uses *America on Film: Representing Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality at the Movies* (Benshoff & Griffin, 2009), which focuses on American Studies themes as they are played out through film. Thus, I had to become familiar with these themes to the extent that I could then analyze films in light of them, and guide students in doing likewise.

EAP and AURC

EAP teaching and learning strategies that are used in the Academic Accelerator Program are different from those used in the IEP context. Early on, I discovered that the *AUR* in AURC is assumed in academic course work, but is unfamiliar to non-native speakers. Using AURC as a guide, I helped students to use text features (e.g., unit and chapter titles, subheadings, illustrations and captions) not only to preview a reading, but also to inform their judgments as to what they should access, understand, and recreate within the reading. Because students are non-native readers dealing with extremely dense text, making meaning out of the readings in their entirety is not likely, so learners needed to make informed decisions about what parts of the chapter to focus on first.

As in Soods's EAP 101, my students practiced asking questions about the text, both before reading and after reading. Asking questions about the text or subject matter, a typical pre-reading strategy, serves to focus the subsequent reading by providing a purpose for reading, and is primarily tied to accessing the hierarchical structure of the reading. Asking questions after reading involved revising the questions to reflect what had actually been covered in the text (some pre-reading questions, for example, were not covered, and some new content conflicted with what readers *thought* they knew, so they had to reconcile the two) as well as any evolving

ideas about what information was critical to their understanding of the text. Post reading questioning involved the understanding, recreating, and critical consideration of ideas.

Vocabulary and Grammar

Vocabulary and grammar were taught and learned in the context of the discipline, as represented by a textbook chapter. For example, discipline-specific jargon in this course covered film language (e.g., *producers*, or *independent films* versus *Hollywood blockbusters*), language related to American studies (e.g., representation of female *stereotypes* in film), and general academic vocabulary such as *portray* and *represent*. Students were expected to be able to use this jargon so as to participate in group discussions, teach their peers, and write papers in both EAP 102 and AMS 100 courses. The Benshoff and Griffin (2009) text bolded all discipline-specific concepts, so students knew to keep an eye out for and take notes on those important terms. Together in class, we explored vocabulary sources (e.g., vocabulary.com) to round out vocabulary knowledge so that students could develop a wider sense of the word in order to reinforce its disciplinary use.

Grammar structures in EAP 102 are dealt with only as they are necessary to students' ability to use them in discussing and writing about content. Adjective clauses, for instance, are commonly used to define jargon both in speaking and writing, so we covered adjective clauses. However, we did not name the grammar structures, nor did we explore all of the uses and forms. We only explored adjective clauses in the context of using them to define jargon. In addition, the passive voice and word forms were useful for varying sentence structure containing jargon. For example, *represent* is commonly used for characters and the stereotypes that they portray, but if a student can use the verb in both active and passive voice, as well as use a variety of related word forms, it increases the possibilities for expressing the same ideas multiple times without resorting to the same sentence structure. See below for examples:

- The flapper represented a new openness about sexuality.
    - This sexual openness, represented by the flapper, was new.
- This section covers the representation of white people in film.
    - White people are represented as wealthy and powerful in this film.

Adaptation and Struggles

Ultimately, I came to very much enjoy teaching the class. I had very few issues adapting my traditional IEP classroom approach (general ESL) to an approach more appropriate for EAP and found that the EAP practices actually informed my IEP approach.

Peer-to-Peer Teaching

My greatest takeaway was the peer-to-peer teaching approach used in the course in order to minimize the learning burden on each individual student. For example, a given chapter was 20 to 25 pages long. It was assumed that non-native speakers would have difficulty completing that much reading over the course of just a few days. Thus, the chapters were broken down into sections and subsections, and a given group of students was tasked with becoming the "experts" on one portion. Each group read its assigned text, and then wrote questions targeting the main

ideas and significant support for their section. Then, groups were reorganized to have one expert per section; experts were tasked with teaching group members about their section, and while listening to each expert, group members took notes from the expert. Since we then followed up with a quiz, experts had a strong incentive to be accountable for their classmates' learning.

The first time that we did this activity, much of it occurred in the classroom, with my support as they made meaning out of text, constructed questions to get at salient content, and then prepared their expert lectures. As we practiced this over time, however, more and more of the preparation was done independently, with group members exchanging email addresses and phone numbers in order to keep in touch and work to complete their section. Students reported liking the group approach as it would prepare them to work in study groups in the future, and I found it to work so well that I have adapted the practice in IEP classes I teach.

Challenges

None of the above is to say that I did not struggle a bit, but the issues I dealt with were fairly mundane. One issue was citation manager software. When I began writing graduate papers in the early 2000s, I was unaware of any citation manager systems. As a result, I kept a massive list of all of the sources related to my research until I finished my final degree in 2013. By the time these citation managers were becoming popular, my list was far too advanced to start over, so I had never learned how to use one. I had to go through my own learning curve before I could help my students with it. My most challenging hurdles were learning to use the References tool in Word and changing to MLA formatting.

Another issue was that I was unable to keep up with the reading. Students were reading two to three chapters over the course of two to three weeks. I was unable to keep up with it, just as I suspect my students were. I was familiar with typical American Studies themes (gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity), but these themes as portrayed in film was a new way of considering them. A few weeks into the semester, though, I realized that I had seen enough movies in my lifetime to see the connection quite clearly. I focused my reading on discussion of American Studies themes, using the same AURC approach that I was teaching my students to use, and bypassed the discussions about how the themes played out in film.

Finally, I am fairly narrow in my taste in films. I had never seen any of the Hollywood blockbusters that the students were asked to comment on in their speaking and writing, and I was not interested in paying to rent them or committing an evening to watching them. I used Wikipedia, Internet Movie Database (IMBD), and YouTube to develop at least a surface familiarity of the films. Sometimes my familiarity was so on the surface that my lack of expertise was evident to students. I was concerned that this demonstrated to learners a lack of investment in the course on my part: I was quite invested in the American Studies themes, but not so much as these themes were manifest via film. If I teach the course again, I will give more of my attention to the films.

Conclusion

Overall, we learned that there are a few initial challenges moving from ESL to EAP; however, this kind of transition is manageable by incorporating previous experience from EGAP courses. In our case, the strengths and skills we built through teaching reading, writing and grammar ESL courses as IEP instructors prepared us for teaching EAP courses in the Academic Accelerator Program. The contribution that English teaching experience can make towards EAP teaching has also been recognized by Steph Dimond (n.d.) in her article *The new order: EAP as general English*. She states "I would argue that the need for the knowledge honed through teachers' experience in more generic programs retains key value even in this more specialized context" (p.35). Finally, the key to making a successful transition to EAP is to develop a wider awareness of the shift in teaching approaches. What we learn while making this transition can prepare us for other transitions that might happen in the future.

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