Transferability of Academic English Skills to Discipline Courses:
A Survey-Based Study in the Indian Context

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Introduction

This study attempts to explore the extent to which English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses offered at Ambedkar University Delhi (AUD), have been successful in predicting and offering need-based instruction to meet students' academic English demands across the university curriculum. It focuses on elements of EAP instruction which have been found useful and available to students in content courses. This paper presents the findings of a survey that was designed to investigate students' and teachers' perceptions of the relationship between the instructions which students received in the EAP course and the actual tasks they found in discipline courses. The results of the survey indicate the efficacy of teaching certain skills in EAP which students considered most relevant while engaging in academic tasks assigned in other discipline courses. Data was collected through open and close ended survey questions, interviews and group discussions over a semester. It was difficult to measure the transferability of EAP skills to other courses as many academic English requirements are implied in the curriculum of the content courses and often taken for granted in transaction of the course material and thus not easy to capture through qualitative methods.

The academic English courses offered at AUD to first-year undergraduate (UG) students assume that what is taught and learned in these classes will help students function well in their reading, writing, speaking and listening tasks across the curriculum. The aim of the course is to prepare students for assignments across the university curriculum by focusing on specific demands of the content courses. To understand the extent to which the EAP

course offered to UG students benefits them and enables them to use these skills across the curriculum, a study was conducted in winter semester 2018 (January to April).

While planning EAP courses for a fresh batch of students entering the university system, certain assumptions guide the organisation of course content and help in predicting future academic English needs of students as they navigate through the undergraduate curriculum. Even when specific requirements of content areas are kept in mind while designing the EAP course, it is still unclear how much of it has led to transferability of academic English skills to other discipline courses and whether such interventions have been able to meet the future language needs of the students.

Literature Review

Existing literature focusing on academic needs of EAP courses use a lot of surveys of faculty. One such study (Bridgeman and Carlson 248) has documented different types of writing assignments. Another study discusses various kinds of rhetorical skills needed to complete academic writing tasks (Rose 115). Santos's 1988 study and Lorenz's 1984 research include faculty reactions to second language (L2) student writing (qtd. in Leki and Carson 82).

Structured interviews were used to study the engagement of eighty L2 students who had completed intensive English language courses across five universities (Christison and Krahnke 65). The participants identified the two receptive skills, listening and reading, as the most significant areas in their academic work. The data indicated that they spent only ten percent of their time on writing tasks. This is quite contrary to the general expectation of course curriculum and assessment structures of university programs. Most courses evaluate students' engagement and understanding of course content through a variety of writing tasks (such as, in class exams, take home essays, project reports, research papers and so on). Therefore, the mismatch between students' investment in writing tasks and curricular

expectations assessed through their writing competence needs to be bridged by making relevant pedagogical interventions. Academic writing abilities of students' is directly linked to achievement and demonstration of academic success (Saville-Troike 206).

Some recent qualitative studies reveal issues around students' academic language needs. For instance, a study using participant observation investigated cognitive operations needed to complete academic tasks of a business course (Currie 107). While discussing academic English needs of students, it is important to take into consideration student perceptions of the relevant skills they need for academic requirements in discipline courses. For example, a study reports that students' beliefs about "what they are learning and what they need to learn" has a direct correlation to their receptiveness and openness to learning (Horwitz 126). Therefore, in EAP class what students learn is strongly determined by what they perceive as important. This study in the Indian context focuses on understanding students' perceptions of what they consider important to learn in their EAP course which can be potentially used in other content courses.

Drawing from interaction and sociocultural studies, Verplaetse's review highlights the need to create opportunities for "extended oral and written discourse" to develop academic English of students (qtd. in DiCerbo et al. 465). Similar findings are reported from content classrooms where teacher-student oral interactions seem to influence the development of academic English skills. The study highlights the need for incorporating "classroom activities that reflect complex thinking and language patterns valued in academia" (Zwiers 113).

A study on first language (L1) writing discusses factors that impact the way students tackle writing tasks in discipline courses (Marsella et al. 179). It was found that the writing prompt provided by the professor and students' perception of successful strategies employed in previous assignments for dealing with similar academic tasks had an effect on their

performance. These factors are applicable to ESL (English as a Second Language) students as well. However, in an ESL context the EAP class is most often the first experience of engaging with academic writing process in a systematic manner (noticing language features, dialogic reflection, exposure to different genres, developing metalinguistic competence and so on) and plays a formative role in strengthening EAP skills. Hence, it is important to understand students' experiences of doing EAP courses to map the course material with student needs.

Context of the Study

In Ambedkar University Delhi, each year approximately two hundred and forty students are admitted to various UG programmes in its Kashmere Gate campus and around one hundred and eighty students join the UG programme in the Karampura campus. Students' English and Hindi language proficiency levels are assessed, and they are identified as basic, intermediate or advanced users of English. There is an interesting correlation in the data collected over the last five years of the Language Proficiency Test (LPT). Students who have high scores in English are generally not very high scorers in Hindi and vice-versa. Strong bilinguals are preferred in the research literature (Cummins 243) to ensure a cognitive advantage in handling academic course requirements. This has implications for classroom teaching such as encouraging students to read in multiple languages, including multilingual sources in their research-based assignments, using L1 as a strategic scaffold in the classroom and allowing students to translanguage freely in the classroom. Especially in writing and reading tasks, the pre-task includes brainstorming and note making by mixing L1 and L2. The writing of first drafts allows mixing of linguistic codes and comparing metalinguistic features of their L1 and L2 (English) while peer feedback discussions are also done bilingually. Students with intermediate and lower intermediate proficiency are exposed to a multilingual pedagogy

imparting EAP skills. Moreover, cross-linguistic transfer of language skills are encouraged and strategies are consciously employed to use multilingualism as a resource in the classroom while engaging students in academic tasks.

While students with basic proficiency in English go through a proficiency enhancement course called English Proficiency Course (EPC) before doing EAP, the rest of the groups directly enrol for the foundational compulsory course called EAP. This course aims at strengthening academic listening, speaking, reading and writing skills of the students in such a manner that they are prepared to cope with the demands of discipline courses. Other than faculty inputs and feedback from experts in language education on the essential components of the EAP course, it was felt that the course team must investigate students' perception of doing EAP and their understanding of how this course facilitates learning across the curriculum, before initiating curriculum renewal work as part of the University's decennial review project.

The Study

To investigate the transferability of academic English skills from the EAP course to other content courses across the curriculum, a replication study was conducted in the Indian context following the framework of Leki and Carson (Leki and Carson 86). A survey questionnaire was administered to two hundred students across the two campuses of AUD (Karampura and Kashmere Gate). Structured and unstructured interviews and focussed group discussions were conducted with eighty students and twenty faculty members. The academic skills included for the survey were writing (assignments, papers, articles and projects), reading (complex academic texts and different text types), speaking (presentations, group discussions) and listening (academic lectures). This paper reports data relating to writing and speaking tasks from the EAP course. Aspects which were considered important for academic success at

AUD were grouped into the following themes: content, rhetorical skills (style, strategy, organization), language proficiency, critical thinking and task management strategies (Leki and Carson 86). A crucial question which was included in the survey was, "Should students be grouped based on a Language Proficiency Test at the beginning of the 1st semester to identify student needs for the EAP course?"

There have been ongoing discussions at AUD on whether grouping students based on their proficiency levels at the beginning of the first year would be appropriate. Classes with mixed proficiency levels of students were reported to be difficult to teach by those who taught the EAP courses in 2008-2010 at AUD. In these classes, if the teacher selected complex texts for certain students, the texts would be way beyond what others could handle. Students' proficiency in English ranged from A1 to C1 (on Common European Framework of Reference) and it was a daunting task for the teacher to achieve the pedagogic goals in such a teaching- learning context. Thus, based on feedback from teachers it was decided that students would be grouped based on their performance on the test: basic, intermediate or advanced. As mentioned earlier, students identified as basic users of English are required to complete an English Proficiency Course (EPC) before taking up the EAP course.

Both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection were used in the study. Quantitative methods may not necessarily be theory-laden, or hypothesis driven, and definitely never (as they are deployed by people) value-free. Similarly, qualitative research cannot be completely invalid as it must depend on some inter-subjective (if not 'objective') reality. The two approaches often complement each other. Background statistics or just a few figures can also set the scene for an in-depth qualitative study. In the context of data collection, most methods in educational research yield both qualitative and quantitative data. Interviews can produce quantitative data and so can questionnaires. Hence this study used

multiple tools for data collection so that triangulation of data is possible. The analysis includes both qualitative and quantitative data to understand the transferability of academic English skills in academic English courses at AUD.

Triangulation of data (Cohen et al. 79; Silverman 45) using multiple sources of evidence (interviews, observations, questionnaires, discussions, journal entries and so on) is a method used in qualitative research to establish validity of the findings. However, researchers have argued that if the 'real' picture is considered context bound (which means that the same set of interactions would have a different meaning in different contexts) then it is "difficult to bring together data collected in different contexts to make overall sense of the phenomena" (Webster and Mertova 91). Yet, triangulation of data is often used to validate the different sources of qualitative data and validating the interpretations of the researcher. Although in this study the attempt was to study what "really" are the perceptions of students in the EAP language classroom, it must be acknowledged that what was actually studied were "students under observation".

The methods of data collection relied on techniques which elicit self-reporting and introspection on the part of the students and teachers. It has been argued that the process of verbalization could alter the actual process under investigation. These arguments have been downplayed by other researchers and stimulated recall as a research method has been considered to strike a balance between "fidelity to and control over the spontaneity of the original situation" (Flower and Hayes 13). In the structured interviews stimulated recall was used to assist students and teachers in the process of responding to the questions. Researchers within the qualitative research framework reject the concept of validity as applicable to strictly quantitative research methods. Criteria such as internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity, applicable to quantitative data, are considered inappropriate.

Instead concepts like credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability have been proposed (Lincoln and Guba 85).

Findings of the Study

Students enrolled in BA English, Psychology, History, Mathematics, Economics and Social Sciences and Humanities were part of the study. The survey instrument focused on students' preparedness on the course as well as the extent to which the course had prepared them for various assignments in content courses. They were required to rank their preparation for academic writing and speaking tasks on a scale of 1 (not well at all) to 5 (very well).

Preparation Quality Reported for EAP Writing and Speaking Tasks (%)					
Not well at all	Not very well	Adequately	Well	Very well	Unknown
6	11	32	36	10	5

 Table 1: Preparation quality for EAP writing and speaking

Students were asked to indicate the requirements for a good grade in their content courses. 49% students felt that professors considered content as the most important criteria for a good grade on the course.17% of the students indicated that professors looked for rhetorical skill (ability to organize content and to write/speak clearly). 20% of the students indicated that language proficiency (grammar, vocabulary along with fluency) was important. 10% of the students thought that critical thinking skills were important in their discipline courses.

Finally, miscellaneous included length of answers, clarity of voice, body language, handwriting etc.

Requirements for a good grade on assignments in content courses (%)	
Content	49
Rhetorical skills	17
Language proficiency	20
Critical thinking	10
Miscellaneous	04

 Table 2: Requirements for a good grade in content courses

72% students felt that they had been relatively successful in their assignments and in their courses in general. Through the survey and interviews, it was important to understand which aspects of the EAP course they perceived to be useful in their content-course assignments. The responses to this question were grouped into five categories as shown in table 3.

Learning from EAP course which is important for success in content courses (%)	
Task management strategies	40
Rhetorical skills	24
Language proficiency	19
Thinking skills	15
Miscellaneous	02

Table 3: Aspects of EAP course considered important for content courses

Task management strategies which include managing text (like brainstorming, planning, outlining, drafting, revising, proofreading), managing sources (which include summarizing, synthesizing, reading, using quotes) and managing research (library skills and research skills) were considered the most important skills in the EAP course as well as important for success in content courses. 40% students indicated that EAP was important as the task management strategies included skills which are seldom taught in other content courses. Students are expected to "pick-up" these skills on their own. Students felt that these skills were essential for them to succeed in their assignments. 24% students felt that rhetorical skills like organization, transitions and coherence were important in content courses, while 19% felt that aspects of language proficiency were important. 15% of students highlighted that thinking skills like critiquing, analysing, developing ideas and arguing logically were necessary for a good grade in their assignments. Tables 2 and 3 show that task management strategies which are considered most important for success in academic tasks

are explicitly taught only in the EAP courses. These strategies are necessary for students to organize, manage and present content in written and oral assignments in other courses. The data indicates how students' perception of what they learn in EAP courses is related to the skills required to perform well in content courses.

It was interesting to note that though students felt that professors rank thinking skills below content, rhetorical skills and language proficiency, interviews with professors indicated just the opposite. Most professors indicated that they considered critical thinking skills as the most important aspect while grading assignments. All the 20 teachers who were interviewed, reported that these categories were not considered linearly while marking assignments but were intricately linked to each other. Table 4 presents the data collected from teachers teaching content courses of B.A. English, Psychology, Economics, Sociology and History. When they were asked about their grading criteria for evaluating assignments of students, these categories emerged from the data collected through structured and unstructured interviews:

Criteria for Evaluation	Statements of Professors
In-depth analysis	I want to see that the student has gone deeper into the topic of discussion. Are they questioning their biases? Are they critical of the content presented to them? (Assistant Professor, Psychology) Students have to go beyond summarising. They need to scratch the surface and look at the issue from multiple lenses. Even if language is not very complex, their thoughts can be expressed in simple sentences. I do not grade them on their language ability. I look for analysis.

	(Assistant Professor, English)
Engagement with multiple sources	When I give a take home assignment, I expect them to read multiple authors and then synthesise a nuanced understanding of the topic. (Assistant Professor, Sociology) I keep telling my students that they need to engage with the ideas of different writers in the field. That should become evident in their writing or presentations. I feel some students do well in oral presentations but when it comes to writing, they can't express. (Professor, History)
Originality in thought	I encourage students to approach the readings with their personal experiences and understanding of reality. If they are able to bring their 'voice', I grade those assignments higher than others who are simply repeating what others have said. I teach literature and literary analysis is part of class discussion. We analyse texts and focus on bringing one's own understanding… Some students are able to relate their own experiences and draw strong connections. I look for connections that they make between other texts and their own experiences and viewpoints. (Assistant Professor, English)
Relevance of content to the	…students do not respond to the question and often write generic answers. I keep emphasising in class that they need to build an argument and

prompt	answer the question. (Assistant Professor, Economics)
	My expectation is that students answer the question directly instead of beating around the bush! A student who has tried to answer the question gets a better grade than the one who has just written a lot of things about the topic but has not really made any point. (Associate Professor, Sociology)
Coherence and Cohesion	I look for some flow in their writing. Paragraphs need to be linked and there must be sufficient examples to support their claims. (Assistant Professor, History)

Table 4: Teachers expectations from students in writing and speaking assignments

Students were asked to rank order the skills which they most frequently used in their assignments from other courses (Table 5). The findings were similar to Leki & Carson's study where students indicated that they used rhetorical skills most frequently (1-7) followed by aspects related to language proficiency (8-11). Task management strategies (14-17) were ranked much lower by students when indicating frequency of use. The reasons why students seemed to focus on rhetorical skills and language related aspects in their assignments also came up during focussed group discussions:

When we are preparing for assignments and presentations, we get too overwhelmed with difficult readings. While writing, the focus is mostly on organizing and presenting the concepts well. I also get caught up in technical words which I don't know. Often, we don't think about the rules of academic writing because the teachers don't teach it in class.

Another student highlighted that the demands of academic writing and speaking assignments were way beyond what they are equipped to handle:

> In the first year we don't know anything about academic language. Such things are never taught in schools. I didn't know referencing. In school, we mostly copied our answers from textbooks. So suddenly when we are told that this is plagiarism I was confused. All these things are so new to me that while writing assignments and making presentations I get nervous. I find it very difficult to organize everything and use good words.

When students were asked to talk about the aspects of academic writing and speaking which they most focussed on in their content courses, students said:

> I worry a lot about my language as my grammar is not good. I am from Hindi medium.

> I don't understand how to start the essay. I get nervous and stressed. So then I take help from the internet because I am not sure how to write better.

> I didn't go to library to refer to books in school. But now teachers expect us to read many books and articles so I find it difficult to read so many things. Then I get confused while writing. So I try to write simple sentences. But I know that I should improve my writing. In presentations also I feel nervous.

The data from the questionnaire as well as the interviews and discussions show that students generally do not use task management strategies frequently in their assignments which were considered the most important skills in academic writing/speaking. EAP courses were thus seen to play an important role in equipping students with task management strategies which were considered most essential to obtain a good grade in assignments.

EAP skills	Number of Students (Out of 200)		
1. Coherence	92	14. Paraphrase	81
		15. Summarize	79
2. Transitions	90	16. Synthesize	78
3. Organization	91	17. Reading response	75
		18. Increase vocabulary	75
4. Punctuation	91	19. Edit	70
5. Grammar	91	20. Draft/Revise	60
6. Fluency	90	21.Timed	
7. Use examples	89	writing/presentations/readings	50
8. Think of ideas	85	22. Use library	30
9. Expand ideas	84	23. Connect reading to experience	25
10. Develop ideas	84	24. Topic selection	25
11. Express ideas	84	25. Peer feedback	05
12. Outline	82	26. Plagiarism	05
13. Word choice	80		

Table 5: EAP Skills used most frequently in assignments of content courses and student responses

Interviews and discussions with students revealed an interesting perception related to aspects of language proficiency, specifically grammar. Students indicated that though professors do not consider grammar as an important criterion while grading assignments in content courses, it was still considered the most important area which students wanted to improve upon. This was because students felt that their overall language proficiency depended on correct language use which would also help them to complete their assignments in less time. Many students thus indicated that if their knowledge of grammar was good, they would struggle less while writing their assignments as well as feel more confident while speaking.

The table below reports some of the important categories that emerged from the data collected from focused group discussions and interviews with students on what factors contribute to getting a good grade in other course assignments. When they were asked about the most important criteria to get a good grade in their core courses, these were some of the responses:

Category	Statements
Grammar and vocabulary (language)	I think writing in good English is important. I do not use very heavy words in my assignments. I want to improve my sentences and learn new words. Teacher has not asked me to improve grammar, but I feel I need to work on that. It become (sic) difficult for me to write well.

	The teacher looks at the style of writing like correct grammar. My grammar is not good, so I am improving now. I am working harder than others, like English medium students. If grammar is good, then it will be easy to write and faster too.
Giving examples	I think giving examples improves my writing and increases my grade. Once I got B in my assignment and I asked my professor. She said I must give examples to support my point of view.
Structure and organisation	I always follow the introduction, body, conclusion format for writing my papers. I think this helps me to organise my thoughts. My grade depends on the way I present my ideas and thoughts.
Content	I think theoretical knowledge is important. For example, if the teacher is teaching me folk literature so he will expect me to know a few definitions which is from the existing theoretical literature. So they see how much I have gained from the books and classroom sessions-the theory part.

Table 6: Students' perception of important criteria for good grades

The above data clearly indicates that there exists a huge gap between students' perception of good writing and teachers' expectations in terms of task management. 16 out of 20 faculty members interviewed for the study highlighted that the content in EAP courses needs to be linked to other courses to facilitate transferability of skills. To achieve this, the teachers of content courses and EAP courses need to work closely with each other to ensure transferability of skills from EAP to the content courses.

Discussion

Students' insistence on direct grammar and vocabulary instruction in EAP classes, although not important aspects for assessing academic assignments at the university, showed that students considered these important while studying and preparing for assignments. For example, students indicated that those who had control over grammar and vocabulary could read texts faster and spent less time on a single assignment. This suggested that students wanted to work on improving aspects of language in the EAP classes to read and write faster and speak with greater confidence. It was found that students were more concerned about "efficiency" rather than "accuracy".

The EAP course at AUD focuses on introducing students to various academic text types, different genres of writing, critical thinking skills and the heuristic functions of language. Yet students' insistence on including English teaching in these courses revealed the fact that at the university level certain assumptions are made about the language proficiency levels of students. It is expected that students already have sufficient English to engage with higher order skills in an academic English course. However, in the Indian ESL context students are still grappling with basic grammar and vocabulary. Hence there seems to be a considerable gap between the expectations of students and the actual objectives of the course.

Another interesting aspect that the interviews revealed was that students considered the EAP teacher to be an expert in the language but not in the content. For example, Economics students reported that they did not expect the teacher to know much about their content subjects and hence did not make much effort to present accurate content in EAP assignments. A student from BA Economics said:

> In economics we have to read different kinds of things and they are very difficult concepts. Such readings are not covered in EAP. Ma'am may not understand those concepts. So, I write general things in the EAP assignments. But for Economics assignments I have to work harder. It is not just language, but the focus is on concepts.

Consequently, students reported that they were less motivated to present a well-researched assignment or presentation in the EAP course than they were for a content course. The findings indicated that students wanted the course to focus more on task management strategies like planning, synthesizing information and research skills than on general aspects of academic reading and writing. 74% of students said they would benefit more from the course if it required them to refer to multiple sources of information and synthesize ideas to present their arguments or positions in assignments. They would also like to be trained to use the library and search for relevant sources to build into their assignments. Thus, research skills were considered essential to excel in content courses. However, interviews with teachers revealed that a basic level EAP course at the UG level may not always be able to exclusively focus on task management strategies which makes the course sometimes look "too easy" in terms of content:

> If we have to train students to analyse and synthesize ideas from multiple sources, brainstorm and plan their assignments, use paraphrasing and summarising effectively and write multiple drafts, students need to have a certain level of proficiency in English which is not entirely feasible in a public university like ours. We have highly heterogeneous groups where most students are at an intermediate level of proficiency in English. Hence, students

expect the EAP course to "improve" their English more than to teach them academic writing and speaking skills.

The transferability of skills from the EAP course to content courses would require teachers to use specific texts and materials from content courses in EAP assignments. It would also require the EAP course to challenge students intellectually to be able to motivate them to use task management strategies in the course which would not assess them on content. It was also found that when students engaged with more challenging academic content in EAP courses, they felt confident about their academic reading and writing skills. This made students optimistic about coping with the intellectual challenges posed by complex texts in the content courses. However, some students felt that using challenging texts in the EAP course would demoralise them further:

> We find it difficult to cope with the readings and presentations in other courses. The EAP course helps us to improve our skills which we are lacking. But if this course also makes us read difficult materials then students will suffer from low confidence.

Another student said:

> EAP course should use the same readings which we get in our subject courses. Then we can learn to write better and we will get more confidence.

This idea was reiterated by other students in the group discussions and interviews:

> We should use readings and books from other courses to learn how to write better. That will give us more practice in writing our assignments, learning to organize our ideas and present them well. When we get feedback on our writing then we can improve on the shortcomings.

> Readings used in the EAP courses should be at the same level as our other courses. Then only we can learn how to write our assignments well and get good grades.

> In the EAP course we should be taught the difficult word which we find in other courses. Then this course will be more beneficial.

Students' responses in interviews and discussions were similar to what was reported by teachers. Both suggested that the content of the EAP course must match the linguistic and cognitive levels of the readings which are presented to students in other courses. This would allow maximum possibility for transfer of skills from the EAP course to the content courses.

Language Proficiency Test (LPT)

All the 200 students claimed that the LPT was essential in grouping them into appropriate sections for language courses. Many students highlighted that most institutions in higher education in India do not acknowledge the need to provide need-based instruction. The LPT is an attempt to identify student needs and offer courses which are meaningful to them. 20 faculty members were interviewed to understand their views on the LPT. They unanimously agreed that the test is a vital tool to ensure that we identify and address students' English language needs. This is also a way to make English accessible to all students rather than clubbing them in highly mixed ability classes and fail to address any of their language needs especially in short term courses such as EAP which is essentially 12-14 week long. This method of grouping students according to their proficiency levels thus facilitates language courses to be able to provide needs-based instruction. Hence, it ensures that each cohort presents a range of proficiency in English which aids in peer learning but avoids extreme disparity in proficiency levels of students which can actually hinder learning instead of assisting it. Some excerpts from student and faculty interactions have been given below:

Implications

As discussed above, most of the students surveyed for the study felt that the EAP course offered at AUD was useful for them in coping with assignments in content courses. Sometimes when students felt that the course did not help them in coping with the demands of content courses, they also acknowledged that their engagement with the course might not have been adequate to be able to benefit from it. 26% students reported that they did not find the course useful immediately after they completed it in their first or second semester of BA but later found the skills extremely relevant in their 5th and 6th semesters when they had to engage with more complex academic texts which required advanced academic reading and writing skills. Moreover, the study revealed that the academic English course raises students' awareness about task management strategies which are essential for academic assignments but are seldom discussed in content courses. Since most content teachers assume students to have such awareness, the relevance of the EAP course gets reinforced.

Students indicated grammar and vocabulary instruction as important aspects of the EAP course which would equip them to cope better with their content courses. These were considered relevant not because they were important for better grades in content courses but because it would make them more efficient readers and writers thus reducing their time spent on each assignment. They would also be able to express themselves more fully if they had a wide range of vocabulary in English. There was also a gap between the reading and writing assignments which they were required to do on the EAP course and in their content courses. The range of academic vocabulary required in content courses was extremely high compared to what students were required to have on the EAP course. This makes the academic English course relevant for students as they engage with aspects of language through academic reading and writing which most often is assumed as a starting point in content courses.

It is necessary to bridge the gap which students believe exists between the demands of writing in their EAP classes and the demands of writing in other courses. For undergraduates, writing in class for the EAP course is a unique experience because it is not the kind of academic writing they are used to at the school level, nor the same as professional or research level writing preferred within specific disciplinary communities. Undergraduate students who are just being initiated into disciplinary writing are also not expected to engage in or contribute to the ongoing professional discourse of historians, sociologists or economists. The assignments at the undergraduate level are rarely reproduced or published elsewhere. These give students an opportunity to explore ideas from different disciplines even when both the student and the community knows that most of these students might never end up becoming part of the knowledge creation process within the discipline. In the Indian context, most students come to university without any training in academic English. They also may not get trained ESL teachers to introduce them to academic reading, writing and speaking. In such a context, students often complete their entire undergraduate course without an awareness of the features of academic discourse as well as the strategies to negotiate with academic content.

Undergraduate students are also expected to engage in knowledge transformation as opposed to "knowledge-telling" forms of writing and presentations according to Leki and Carson (Leki and Carson 96). It is the "knowledge transforming" kind of writing and speaking that promotes learning. Thus, if our goal is knowledge transformation, then we may have a mistaken assumption that a course in academic English is enough to prepare undergraduates for such a knowledge-transforming function (Leki and Carson 86). All courses in the university curriculum contribute to developing skills in critical thinking and transformative learning using language. Therefore, it cannot be the sole responsibility of the EAP course to address these components of the curriculum. Consequently, spaces need to be

created for cross-curricular dialogues to happen between courses as well as course instructors which can lead to strategic interventions to strengthen links between content and academic English skills.

In their first year of undergraduate study students are generally equipped to handle simple themes which is what teachers introduce in the EAP course. This makes the overall preparation for academic tasks difficult to achieve for students with basic and intermediate levels of proficiency in English. By general preparation we mean both topics which students know little about as well as more specific kinds of academic tasks requiring all students to write a report or maybe a case study. Students who participated in this study felt that the following aspects are achievable in the EAP course:

1. After analysing the data it became clear that students are influenced by their earlier experiences of doing school assignments and the EAP course needs to introduce them to a variety of academic texts and not restrict them to only one particular form of writing, like for example, essays.

2. In content courses a variety of themes are generally included, and students need to be encouraged to explore a range of topics for their academic assignments by interacting with their professors and asking for clarifications about task requirements. When students discuss assignment requirements with professors it gives them greater clarity about the teacher's expectations from them. The EAP course can prepare them to approach their professors and clarify their doubts.

3. Students felt that the writing prompts and instructions of content teachers were unclear and there were no common assessment criteria for grading assignments. The ESL teacher in collaboration with content teachers could develop a common assessment rubric which would

make the assessment criteria accessible to the student. This process would make task requirements explicit.

4. Students clearly need support in improving their proficiency in English and merely introducing them to fragmented grammar and vocabulary items will not be sufficient for academic study. Thus, the EAP course can help students engage with whole academic texts while drawing their attention to specific features of academic discourse (syntax and morphology).

5. The EAP course also needs to keep the level of intellectual challenge at par with other content courses. Students' ability to engage with complex ideas develops only with greater engagement with such concepts.

6. It was observed that the use of task management strategies was an important indicator of students' performance in content courses. It is thus important to help students to analyse, synthesise, locate information, evaluate, respond and argue. However, the specific styles of writing and thinking in the disciples cannot be introduced by the EAP teachers as they may not be a member of that discourse community and hence would not be qualified to initiate the student into the specifics of academic writing and thinking within the disciple. This kind of work can only be done by the teachers of the content courses. The EAP teachers however can equip their students to face the demands of the content courses.

The relevance of this study's implications for other instructional settings within India can be determined by taking into consideration the local contexts and student profiles. Transferability of skills from EAP to discipline courses can thus be made relevant by linking content courses and EAP. The skills that EAP develops are essential for task completion in other courses and strengthening cross curricular links. Thus, the findings of the study indicate that it is imperative to identify student needs and map them to language courses which can in

turn feed into their content courses thereby creating a balance between a top-down approach to curriculum design and the actual needs of the learners.

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