What Is Academic English In A Canadian Context, and How Can It Be Tested?

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Agenda

- About Paragon Testing Enterprises
- Academic English in Canada
- About the CAEL Assessment
- Domain analysis
- Implications

About Paragon Testing Enterprises

- A subsidiary of the University of British Columbia

- The developer of
  - The Canadian English Language Proficiency Index Program (CELPIP) Test
  - The Language Proficiency Index (LPI)
  - The Canadian Academic English Language (CAEL) Assessment (starting 2015)

About Paragon Testing Enterprises

Commitment to test availability

- Expansion of test centres across Canada

  - 33 CELPIP Test Centres

  - 25 CAEL Test Centres

- Computerized registration systems

About Paragon Testing Enterprises

<u>Strategic use of computer technology</u>

- Computer-delivered tests

- Distributed test delivery

- Systems to strengthen test security

- Distributed rating

About Paragon Testing Enterprises

Extensive support for test takers

- Instructional products (both paper and electronic format)

- Test preparation programmes

- Mobile apps for both instruction and test preparation

About Paragon Testing Enterprises

<u>Emphasis on quality and the meaningfulness of test scores</u>

- Dedication to human rating of speaking and writing responses with trained and certified raters
- Regular and consistent rater monitoring processes
- Support for language assessment researchers (grants and data)
- Internal test development and research projects

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Number of International Students in Canada (At All Levels)

336,000

83% increase since 2008

65% in post-secondary level

184,155

2008

2014

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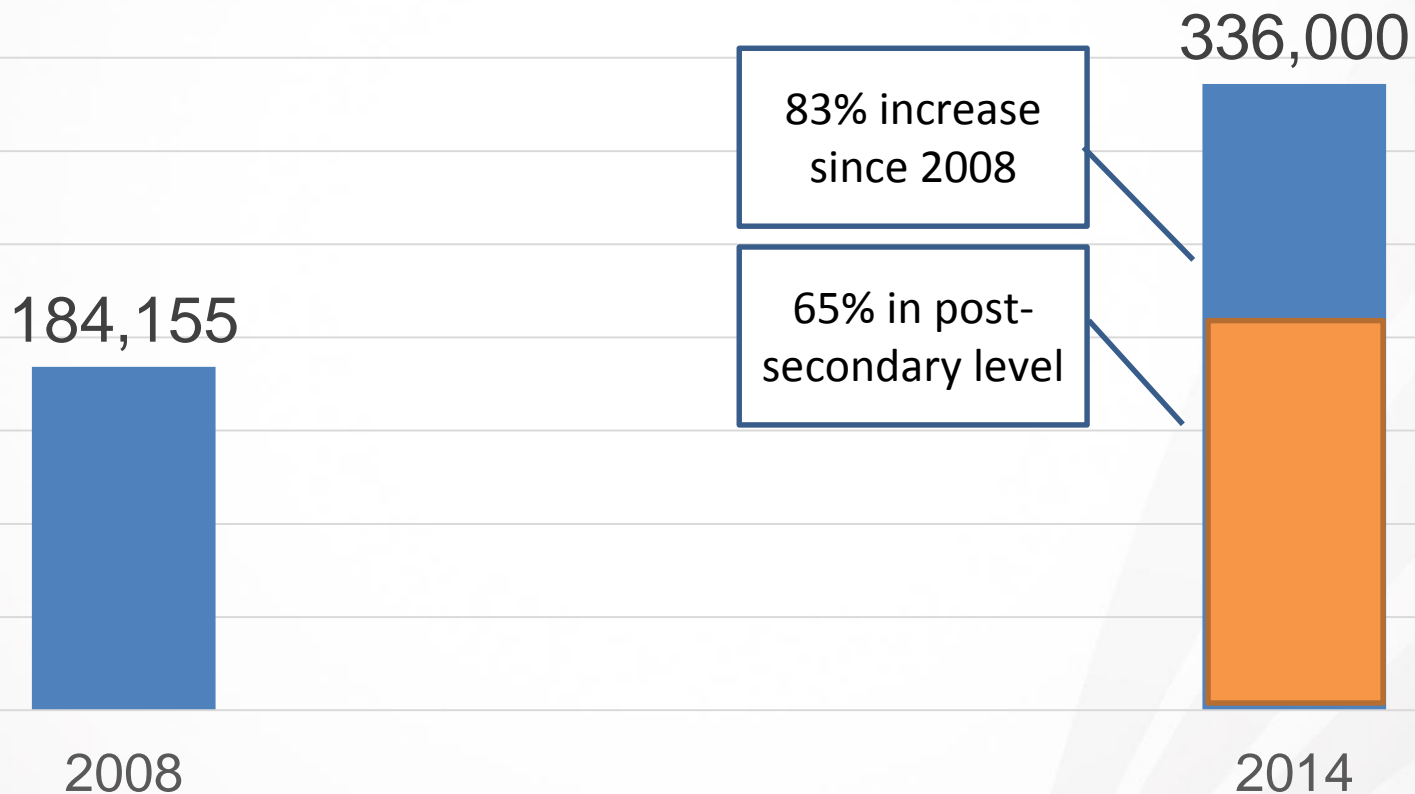
Academic English and Academic Tasks

- Reading: Moore, Morton, & Price, 2012

- Listening: Lynch, 2011

- Speaking: Ferris & Tagg, 1996;

- Writing: Gardner & Nesi, 2013

- General: Rosenfeld, Leung, & Oltman, 2001; Huang, 2013

English Proficiency and Academic Achievement

- Positive impact on academic performance

  – Berman & Cheng, 2001,

  – Cho & Bridgeman, 2012

  – Hill, Storch, & Lynch, 1999

- Potential acculturation through using academic English

Academic English(-In-Use)

- English for academic purposes (EAP) vs. English for general purposes

- Using academic English as a meaning-making practice

- The role of academic context and integratedness

The CAEL Assessment

- The Canadian Academic English Language (CAEL) Assessment
    - First administration in 1989
    - Currently accepted by over 150 institutions
    - Purposes and target population
    - Design approach taken (domain analysis)

The CAEL Assessment

- Special features
  - Topic-based performance test
  - Integrated tasks measuring four skills
  - Extended reading and listening inputs
  - Multiple item formats

The CAEL Assessment

- To ensure the CAEL Assessment remains current
  - Re-examine original premises and claims
  - Confirm the purposes, users, and population
  - Explore the effect of advancements in technology
  - Incorporate modern views of language, and second language acquisition theory

The CAEL Assessment – Domain Analysis

- Importance of domain analysis
- Methods of domain analysis
  - classroom observation
  - interview with students/instructors /academic staff
  - analysis of syllabi/assignments

Academic English in Canada

- Do you think academic interactions have changed in the last 10-20 years?

- What has changed?
- What are the implications for international students coming to Canada?

  – Types of assignments/technology/transferable skills

Domain Analysis: English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in Canada

- Nineteen Canadian universities
- Ten most common disciplines/majors
- More than 100 syllabi analyzed for:
  - Assignment types
  - Assessment criteria
  - Relevance and importance of English language sub-skills (listening, reading, speaking, writing)

This data-driven approach was supplemented by a literature review of English for Academic Purposes (e.g. Rosenfeld et al., 2001; Huang, 2013)

EAP Domain Analysis: Findings

- **Assignment Types**
  - Multiple choice questions
  - Constructed response (short answer questions)
  - Essays
- **Language focus**
  - Explicit language requirements in a number of disciplines
  - Primary language skill is writing
- **Impact of Technology**
  - Electronic communication
  - Use of electronic resources
- **Assessment Criteria**
  - Critical evaluation of sources

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Current Features of
The CAEL Assessment

- Short written constructed responses and longer writing
- Discipline/course based
- Longer input
- Integratedness
- Emphasis on source materials

What is Academic English in Canada

- Technology mediated
- Integration of reading and listening materials in class discussions, presentations, and written output
- Emphasis on critical thinking and evaluation of sources
- Primarily evaluated through extended writing

Future Direction in EAP Testing

- Integrate reading, listening, writing, and speaking
- Provide substantial reading and listening input to contextualize the speaking and writing output
- Focus on critical thinking and constructed meaning through rater training
- Include multiple topics considering the trend towards cross-disciplinary studies
- Embrace new technology – new types of texts and questions

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Thank you!

What is Academic English in a Canadian context, and how can it be tested?

Questions?

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