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

Strategic use of computer technology

• 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

Emphasis on quality and the meaningfulness of test scores

- 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
Number of International Students in Canada (At All Levels)

- 2008: 184,155
- 2014: 336,000

83% increase since 2008
65% in post-secondary level

Source: Canadian Bureau for International Education (http://www.cbie.ca/)
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
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
Thank you!
What is Academic English in a Canadian context, and how can it be tested?

Questions?

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References


• Rosenfeld, M., Leung, S., & Oltman, P. K. (2001). *The reading, writing, speaking, and listening tasks important for academic success at the undergraduate and graduate levels*. Princeton, NJ.