CONTENT-BASED ASSESSMENT IN EAP WRITING: DOES IT REALLY WORK?

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Content-based assessment in EAP writing: does it really work?

- Trends in discipline-based instruction and assessment
- The research context
- Design and methodology
- Findings
- Implications
- Questions
Discipline-based delivery and assessment

Needs analysis model (Belcher, 2006)

Genre analysis (Hyland, 2004; Nesi & Gardner, 2012)

Academic Literacies (Lea & Street, 1998)

Pitfalls of generic EAP (Moore & Morton, 2005; Weigle & Friginal, 2015)

Discipline-based provision (Sloane & Porter, 2010; Wingate & Tribble, 2013)

Discipline-based assessment innovations

Transfer to disciplinary attainment? (James, 2006)
The research context

- Joint-venture university, Shanghai, China
- Business-pathway foundation programme
- N = 341

- EAP Assessment: exam plus content-based coursework
- Writing coursework assessment: EAP Pre-Writing Task
EAP Pre-Writing Task

Select relevant reading texts
Identify and paraphrase key ideas
Produce a reference list
Produce a record of vocabulary
Write an essay plan

Assumption: students ‘must’ do better in the subject assignment by engaging in these processes
Research design

1. To what extent does performance in the EAP Pre-Writing Task correlate with performance in the subject essay?

2. To what extent do students perceive the EAP Pre-Writing Task as helpful to the completion of the subject essay?
Research question 1: data analysis

- Existing data set: results from previous academic year
  - Semester 2 Pre-Writing Task
  - Semester 2 Business Studies Essay
  - Semester 1 EAP overall exam score

- Independent variable: Pre-Writing Task
- Dependent variable: Business Essay

**Null hypothesis: there is no relationship between performance in the EAP Pre-Writing Task and performance in the Business Essay**
Research question 2: questionnaire

• Questionnaire design
  ▪ Item pool > piloting > 10 Likert-scale questions
  ▪ Questions 1-6: how helpful did students find the Pre-Writing Task?
  ▪ Questions 7-10: to what extent did students use the EAP work in the essay?

• Stratified random sampling to produce random number sample: 50 participants

• Administered in lectures (49 respondents)
Findings: Pre-writing task v business task
Findings: Pre-writing task v business task

### Model Summary

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<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
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*Predictors: (Constant), eap writing test*

### ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

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*Dependent Variable: business essay*

*Predictors: (Constant), eap writing test*

### Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

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*Dependent Variable: business essay*
Overall EAP exam v Pre-writing task

Overall EAP exam v business task
Findings: questionnaire

Q1: Doing the PWT made me feel more confident about the Business Essay

Q2: The PWT improved my performance in the Business Essay

Q3: For me, the PWT lacked a clear connection to the Business Essay

Q4: Doing the PWT made me feel confused about the Business Essay

Q5: The PWT work was relevant to the Business Essay

Q6: I was more interested in the Business Essay through doing the PWT
Findings: questionnaire

Q7: List of key ideas from my reading on the topic

Q8: Vocabulary list

Q9: Detailed plan

Q10: Reference List
Findings: summary

- Students felt EAP Pre-Writing Task was relevant
- Students used EAP work in production of essay
- No evidence that Pre-Writing Task impacted attainment in subject-essay marks
Implications and reflections

Limited generalizability

Further research directions

• Statistical analysis
• Qualitative exploration of perceptions in the context:
  • Marking and interpretation of criteria
  • Classroom delivery
  • Possibility of mismatched expectations

Fuller collaboration

• Extensive and intensive collaboration between academic language/literacy v content experts to establish shared expectations
Conclusion

- Importance of reflexivity in teaching, course design and assessment design practices.
- Importance of examining most closely held and unquestioned assumptions
References


Questions?