ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOS (EAP): A BRIDGE TO SUCCESSFUL STUDY IN A FOREIGN UNIVERSITY

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Abstract: This paper aims at discussing the role of EAP in preparing students planning to study overseas based on Indonesian context. The success of one's study in a foreign university where English is as a medium of instructions can be determined by how well his capability to use both spoken and written English. In the case of a student, though, in fact, smart in his discipline, get unsatisfactory result, or even fail in completing his studies because of English. Normally it has good English performance during EAP program, he might have no trouble facing his future studies in English. Previous experience of conducting EAP program has proved how the program could contribute to the overseas studies of the EAP participants. Therefore, EAP program needs to be well-prepared for the students' both spoken and written English content to enhance to the needs of the study of English skills. Since the EAP program should begin with General English (GE) and then later, the language of contents, such as the language level of learners, course length, stage, and materials should be considered. If the average of baseline TOEFL score of students is above 450 as a reference for example, the number of hours for AE should be much bigger.

Keywords: language level of learners, course length, EAP target, EAP materials

INTRODUCTION

The need of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) has been booming in English Language Teaching (ELT) since the last few decades. In Indonesia for example, it began in 1986 in which the government started sending their employers including university employees abroad for furthering their studies (Prahindiskinto, 2006). At the language Institute of Sriwijaya University of Palembang, Indonesia for example, the EAP program in cooperation with Suppenas (National Development and Planning Board) started conducting EAP program called OTO (Overseas Training Organization) Suppenas at that time for university lecturers in 1985. Since then, the program has been running from period to period serving a variety of EAP users from the Department of National Education, Suppenas as well as other state and local institutions. Moreover, with the development of science and technology in the era of global market, the EAP program is becoming more and more not only for university employees but also among the public including senior high school learners planning to gain knowledge in a foreign university whether their EAP is as a medium of instruction. Because of the increase of EAP users and the fulfillment EAP demand among its users, EAP courses are available not only in universities but also elsewhere in the society. Private educational institutions in some big cities in Indonesia for example, are now offering EAP program. Apart from whether or not the EAP program succeeds in serving the demand of users, in fact both universities and private educational institutions are still popular places where people hunt for EAP. In addition to preparing qualified EAP instructors, they are busy preparing good facilities for the program such as providing classrooms and lab equipped with multimedia or providing access for different kinds of standardized proficiency tests used to complete the program such as TOEFL, IELTS, TOEIC, etc.

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

It is interesting to discuss an overview of what actually EAP means before coming to the real discussion of the topic. The terms EAP and ESP might confuse learners or people wanting

The term ESP is more familiar to most people of the university or college community in Indonesia since there have been many books published and used in universities and higher educational institutions. Basically, EAP is a part of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in language teaching. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) divide ESP into EAP and EOP (English for Occupational Purposes). Both EAP and EOP serve for the same related field of study. The difference is that EAP usually more focuses on academic purposes in which the learner study for the purposes of their study study program. When we refer to the language skills, all language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in addition to language components, are readily needed by the EAP users. Meanwhile, EOP serves for a certain language skill depending on the needs of ESP users. For example, hotel receptionist need speaking skill more rather than other language skills since they need to communicate with their customers directly. In addition to materials, some other differences that might have between EAP and EOP are such as length of program, type of users, target needs, etc. These will not be further discussed in the following. In addition, it should be noted that the terms _students_, _learners_, and _participants_ are interchangeably used to suit the context in the description of the topics.

Since EAP is a branch of ESP in language teaching, it should also be noted that EAP users are assisted while they learn. As stated in http://www.uefap.com/bgnd/fs, for academic purposes that one of the characteristics of ESP is that ESP is likely to be designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution (the learners could also be at the secondary school level) or in a professional work situation. Meanwhile, Robinson (1980, p. 9) states that "the most people the learner of ESP is an adult or near adult." From this description it could be told that EAP users can be classified into two major types: students (majority tertiary students) and non-students (majority vocational high school students) and professional employees. At the university level in Indonesia, for instance, EAP users may refer to students or professionals employees who are ready to work in their field of study. Students are actually the major users of EAP since they English for their studies and have to take English subject included in their study program. In this case, it could be distinguished the division of the two types of EAP program offered by Sriwijaya University of Palembang, Indonesia, regular and non-regular.

Regular EAP Program

The regular EAP program basically refers to the EAP which serves for English course included in the curriculum of students' study program. Again, as it has previously been mentioned, this course is more commonly recognized as ESP to most people since the teaching English focuses on one specific field of study. However, the English teaching is sometimes ineffective as the allocation of time is insufficient. A few study programs or departments at Sriwijaya University offer two or three semesters for the English subject. At the Nursing Study Program, the Faculty of Medicine for example, English subject is included in the curriculum and given one semester in the first semester of two semesters. English is likely to be the materials taught concentrate on a specific field of study, in this case medical science. In some others such as at the Faculties of Agriculture, Engineering, or Math & Natural Science includes English in their curriculum for one semester. With one semester (in an average of sixteen meetings equal to 32 hours) it would be insufficient or unfair that EAP could be well implemented and could serve the need of its users. Therefore, the teaching material much focuses on a certain skill such as academic reading only. Reading skill is more highly demanded by students as they need to read some additional information written in English for their studies. Feng, et al., in http://www.cetu.edu.au/similar/dept/ismc/lst say that one of the purposes for a person to read texts is to find information

Non Regular EAP Program

The other type of EAP, the non-regular program is the EAP program that is extensively offered to those preparing studies overseas. The participants of this program are usually university lecturers, students, and government employees. At the Graduate School of Sriwijaya University

example, the participants of EAP program are mostly Graduate School students to take double masters degree program overseas. This program usually provides hundreds of teaching hours, and usually meets the demand of users, and therefore, the design of EAP should be well prepared as it is a bridge for learners to get a successful study in a foreign university. This program will be further discussed in the following.

How EAP is Prepared

The success of study in foreign universities where English is as a foreign language can be measured by how well one could maintain his or her current English proficiency. It is often found that a student might fail in completing his or her studies because of English language. To achieve good English proficiency in order to survive in academic studies, it is necessary that the learners should take EAP program before entering foreign universities concerned. The EAP program normally provides courses on language proficiency mastery covering the four language skills as well as language components in which the language could later be used as a means of spoken and written communication during the students' life in universities. Therefore, every language skill and language component must be tested by EAP learners for their foreign university survival. Robinson (1991, p. 68) states that "a skill has to be mastered: it cannot simply be explained, but must also be extensively practice."

Based on the writer's experience in conducting EAP program at the Graduate School of Sriwijaya University, there are at least four major points to consider in the preparation of EAP program: level of learner, course length, target, and materials which represent study skills. They are related to each other and will be discussed in turn.

Language Level of Learners

Language level of learners refers to the learner's present proficiency of English language measured by a certain standard of English test. This is usually based on the result of placement test before entering EAP program. The placement test which is commonly used to measure learner's ability is TOEFL ITP (Institutional Testing Program) which is a product of ETS (English Testing Service), the holder of TOEFL in New Jersey, USA. The use of TOEFL ITP for placement test is made as it is not really costly and is accessible in many places which have link with IIEF Jakarta, a branch of ETS corporation, so that EAP users do not need to travel further for the test. At the Graduate School of Sriwijaya University, for example, EAP program does not accept participants whose English proficiency is under 450 of TOEFL score, and it is applicable for them to require participants to take BEAP (Basic English for Academic Purposes) or BELT (Basic English Language Training). The minimum score of TOEFL ITP 450 is a standard entry requirement for EAP participants. With the minimum score, it is assumed that the participants have been familiar with some basic English language components, and they are on the right course. This means that it is not necessary to teach those sorts of basic skills or components in more detail when the EAP program begins.

Course Length

Course Length is also a part of consideration in conducting EAP program. Normally EAP participants' baseline of TOEFL ITP score will determine the length of time for EAP program. If for example, the average TOEFL ITP score of participants is ≥ 500 or ≤ 520, a three to four-month program might be enough. However, if their average baseline score is below 500, the EAP program will usually take four to five months of study. At the Graduate School of Sriwijaya University, the EAP program takes totally five months of study in which the learners are required to make between 450 and 547 or even higher. The five-month course has been chosen because of the following considerations. First, the number of students is usually small between 10 and 15 participants, so it will be efficient and will save energy to have one class though in fact a few participants already have high entry TOEFL score. Second, the number of hours set up for a

the government sending the EAP participants, and it normally depends on the budget allocated for the whole program and the whole participants. Third, a high score of paper-based TOEFL does not guarantee that someone has mastered the language skills since the paper-based TOEFL only measures two language skills, listening and reading, and one language component, structure. Again, in this case the coarse length for EAP program also usually depends on the target needs of EAP.

EAP Target

Again, EAP program is prepared for those who are planning to study overseas at foreign universities using English as a medium of instructions or at local universities which conduct bilingual classes. The universities require English proficiency proved by standardized tests. Some universities require TOEFL scores, some others IELTS scores, and so on. Since the target of TOEFL or IELTS scores inspires the EAP participants to achieve them, the coarse length of EAP program should accommodate the demand of the university concerned. At the Language Lab of Graduate School of Sriwijaya University, the minimum EAP target that must be achieved by students in IBT-based TOEFL score of 81, paper-based TOEFL score of 550 or IELTS score of 6.0 depending on what field of study and which universities are addressed to. For example, students planning to study masters program at Mie University in Japan for Food Production or at UNESCO-IHE Netherland for Civil Engineering are required to have a minimum score of TOEFL ≥550 or IELTS ≥ 6.0, while University of Utrecht requires score ≥580 in TOEFL, etc. ≥80 in TOEFL iBt, or ≥6.5 in IELTS for students entering masters program in Mathematics Education. In short, in addition to having both receptive and productive language skills the target of EAP is basically to achieve the minimum requirement score of TOEFL or IELTS to enter a foreign university where English is used as a medium of instructions.

EAP Materials

Preparing EAP materials is the most complex one to consider. In preparing the materials, it is necessary to learn the previous items – kind, level of learners, and the target achieved – as they determine the material design. Time determines how much of the materials should be prepared for the whole program. Level of learners also determines whether the materials should begin with intermediate level or more intermediate one depending on the average baseline of students' English proficiency. The target of EAP is another crucial point involved in the designing of EAP materials. The higher the target of EAP the more and higher the materials should be prepared. Besides, different types of proficiency test required may cause to vary the materials. For example, if a university requires TOEFL or IELTS, this means both materials of TOEFL or IELTS should be introduced and provided in the EAP program. In addition, the materials must meet or reflect the needs of both general and academic English.

In the EAP program, we generally divide the course into two types; General English (GE) and Academic English (AE). Since the baseline of students' TOEFL score is 5.0 in IELTS, for example, the distribution of GE and AE is mostly made in the ratio of 40 and 60. This means 40% of the total number of hours is for General English and the rest (60%) for Academic English, why has been chosen for GE since it is assumed that the participants have already been familiar to basic general English such as basic grammar (one of; part, one of, verb tense, noun, phrase, etc.) and vocabulary of daily usage (scanning, skimming, finding twice, etc.). However, then, in fact, can be introduced at once during the implementation of EAP program. The following figure shows the time distribution of both GE and AE.

Both GE and AE involve the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing and language components such as structure and vocabulary. The materials for GE basically refer to general topic or theme related to daily life or activities such as making introduction, asking for directions, making request, etc. in speaking or previewing, identifying patterns of organization, discovering topics of paragraphs, etc. in general reading. Meanwhile, those for academic English should accommodate various academic topics of study. Topics will relate to academic such as biology,

critically evaluating information in listening or developing complex ideas within a complete essay in writing. Since EAP covers various topics and themes of language skills and components, the EAP teacher should prepare and vary the materials. Reading material for example, can be taken from authentic text or adapted one. In choosing the text materials, the teacher can actually use the four types of text materials: genuine, adapted, synthesized, and created (Tomlin, 1985, p. 27-48). The first two types are commonly adopted as they are mostly available in most EAP books used. Furthermore, Cox and Hill (2007, p. xiv-xvii, 2004, p. v-xv) offer content map for both GE and AE materials which could be adopted in designing EAP programs.
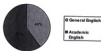
Figure 1: Time Distribution of General and Academic English Total number of teaching hours = 700-800 hours

Again, the percentage of each language skill or language component in terms of teaching hours in both GE and AE may vary depending on what skill or component needs more time to focus, and this is usually based on which areas of language skills or components is stronger for participants are weak in. If for example, the result of placement test or pre-test shows that the average score of reading is low whereas that of listening or structure is much higher, there will be more hours allocated for reading skill and vocabulary and fewer hours for listening or structure. This means the number of teaching hours for each skill or component to be taught might change from time to time within the EAP program.

Program Target and Related Study Results

As mentioned earlier, Graduate School of Srinijaya University has been running an EAP program for Graduate School students. One of the classes of EAP program is its OD-ILM (Double Degree in Integrated Low land management) program, a program for double masters degree in low land management conducted by UNSRI (Srinijaya University) – UNESCO-IHE, Netherlands in cooperation with Hasanudin Indonesia . Double masters program means the program offering double degrees made in both local and foreign universities. Both universities are in cooperation to conduct the program. Students enrolling this program will take a year of study in one university and the other year in a foreign university, and both universities give different degrees. For example, students taking DD-ILM program will get 2 degrees: One from Srinijaya University, and M.Sc degree from UNESCO-IHE. The EAP program, also in cooperation with Hasyanus, has been running for four years. The target of EAP program is that by the end of the program the students have to have an English proficiency measured by a minimum score of either TOEFL pbt 550, TOEFL ibt 86 or IELTS 6.0 as required by the universities addressed to UNESCO-IHE.

Based on the experience of conducting EAP program for the first two groups (2007 and 2008) of DD-ILM UNSRI – UNESCO-IHE, the EAP target generally showed that there had been a good correlation between students' achievement and their program and the students' achievement during their studies overseas. In the first group (2007), out of nine EAP participants, eight main-stream masters program in UNESCO-IHE. In the first group (2007), out of nine EAP participants, eight main masters program in UNESCO-IHE and two of whom even got distinction for their post-graduate mastery. The eight students could successfully complete the courses with double masters degree and have been back to work in Indonesia. The second group completing the courses in UNESCO-IHE and have been back to work in Indonesia. The second group completing the courses successfully in UNESCO-IHE waiting for their graduation.

Apart from whether or not the students are actually good at mastering their field of study because of their previous and present knowledge, at least it could be concluded that English language is not a problem for those who have already taken EAP program which really gives a great benefit. By having a good command of English for both oral and written communication, the survival of academic studies in a university with English instructions can successfully be managed. The following tables show the results of TOEFL scores of both groups of DIALM UNISU-UNESCO-IRI conducted at the Language Lab of Graduate School of Sriwijaya University.

Table 1: Participants' Achievement of EAP Program 2007

No	Participants	TOEFL, pbt EAP Entry (>550)	Required TOEFL, pbt University Entry (>550)	Remarks
1	Participant A	483	577	Completed DD
2	Participant B	503	553	Completed DD
3	Participant C	517	580	Completed DD
4	Participant D	460	577	Completed DD
5	Participant E	497	560	Completed DD
6	Participant F	483	557	Completed DD
7	Participant G	460	563	Completed DD
8	Participant H	487	570	Completed DD

Table 2: Participants' Achievement of EAP Program 2008

No	Participants	TOEFL, pbt EAP Entry (>550)	Required TOEFL, pbt University Entry (>550)	Remarks
1	Participant A	567	650	Completed DD
2	Participant B	550	590	Completed DD
3	Participant C	517	587	Completed DD
4	Participant D	543	577	Completed DD
5	Participant E	543	590	Completed DD
6	Participant F	507	580	Completed DD
7	Participant G	517	563	Completed DD
8	Participant H	483	590	Completed DD
9	Participant I	557	577	Completed DD

The participants have already completed double masters degree program both in Indonesia and in Netherlands and have been back to their workplace.

From both tables, it could be seen that each participant's TOEFL score increased each number of points during EAP program.

CONCLUSION

Successful learners studying in a foreign university where English is as a medium of instructions could be determined by whether or not they could achieve the target mark of EAP program. The target used is mostly based on the required entry of the foreign university to attend, which requires English language proficiency proved by a minimum score of standardized test such as TOEFL or IELTS. The four major points, level of anxiety, course length, target, and materials are related to each other, and need to be considered in the preparing of EAP course program. They must be learned and well prepared so that they would result in a good product in which the EAP participants could possess English knowledge and skills to survive in the foreign university concerned. Some experiences have shown that one with successful completion of EAP program will be successful or survive in completing his or her studies overseas. English language has

become an important role for non-native speakers of English studying overseas. Without a good command of English, one might fail in his or her studies though in fact he or she has a good mastery of his or her discipline. Therefore, it is advisable that EAP program be kept and well managed as it is a bridge to successful study in a foreign university.

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