

AEG Visiting Scholar Talk

The intersection of assessment and language learning: Case analysis of graduate international students

English for academic purposes (EAP) programs across Canada support students in acquiring the academic language skills to be successful in their studies. The structure and premise of EAP programs have been largely focused on undergraduate students (Feak, 2016). This presentation will consider the graduate student perspective: their experience as well as the skills and knowledge they need to be successful. To frame the study, I draw on the National Research Council's (NRC) 2001 description of assessment as shaped by three interrelated components: cognition (construct), observation (tasks), and interpretation (validity). This study took place in an EAP program at a small university in Atlantic Canada. International graduate students who do not meet the language admission requirements may need to take up to two EAP courses: one designed for undergraduate students (EAP 100) and the second for graduate students (EAP 200). Data were collected over a year and a half. First, program documents, including course outlines, were collected. Next, classroom observations of EAP 100 and EAP 200 took place. At the end of the two courses, 16 graduate students completed qualitative questionnaires asking about the skills learned and what was missing. A year later, four students were interviewed about the skills they were able to transfer to their program of study. Data were analyzed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The coding framework developed includes four themes: 1) Construct (social, academic, language); 2) Observation (timed activities, written, oral); 3) Interpretation (stakes, expectations); and 4) Pedagogy (classroom management, assessment for learning). Preliminary findings suggest there is an overlap between the skills and knowledge taught in the two courses, but how those skills are operationalized through assessments (observation and interpretation) do differ. In the presentation, I will invite the audience's thoughts on the skills and assessments needed for international graduate students to be successful in their intended program of study. This presentation may interest to researchers, administrators, graduate students, and EAP practitioners.

Christine Doe is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education, Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Canada. Her research examines the validity of language tests for multiple purposes as well as language use across different contexts, such as higher education and workplace settings. She was the lead researcher for a National evaluation project with the Government of Belize developing second language acquisition teaching strategies for Elementary and Junior level teachers. Dr. Doe has published articles in *Language Assessment Quarterly*, *English for Academic Purposes*, and *System*, as well as presented at international and national conferences. She teaches graduate and undergraduate courses focused on Teaching English as an Additional language, and Assessment in K-12 and adult language learning settings.