ESL for Academic Credit: Politics, Equity and Practicalities

Conference theme

- Taking Stock: Teaching and Assessing in a Global Context

Our Purpose

- Understand who offers what kind of credit ESL courses
- Investigate & consult to identify issues & commonalities
- Identify successful strategies and approaches
- Facilitate informed discussion of ESL for-credit and related issues in B.C.
- Encourage growth of critical mass

Background – where we're coming from

- TRU – mid-sized newer undergraduate-focussed university. No ESL for credit at present.

- Students – 400-500 students in EAP program

- Level 4-5 students can take some academic courses (bridge)

How did we get here?

- Literature review
- Interviews/consultations with post-secondary institutions in Canada and the U.S.

Rationales for ESL for Academic Credit

- Equity/social justice
- Pragmatic/Student motivation
- Marketing & Student Retention

Equity/Social Justice: EAP vs. Academic courses

- EAP is often viewed by the wider academic body as being:

  - remedial, qualifying, preparatory, developmental, peripheral, separate from discipline-specific content (conduit), pre-tertiary, "service"

Equity/Social Justice

- Why is EAP considered preparatory whereas 1st year language courses such as Introductory Spanish? Historical/traditional?

- Remedial refers to students needing upgrading of skills – EAP is not remedial.

- Gaining academic-level proficiency through EAP is a significant (and rigorous) achievement. Advanced classes involve complex grammar, higher-thinking skills, etc.

Pragmatic

- Students in bridge programs become distracted by "real" academic courses
- When EAP courses count toward GPA/entry requirements and are for-credit attitude/motivation changes
- Domino effect – with more effort/attention on EAP courses, students are better prepared for success in their future studies.

Student Recruitment/Retention

- Recruitment/retention is key for the success and stability of any EAP program.

- By offering for-credit courses student recruitment/retention may be improved.

Other barriers

- Union/Faculty Association & affinity with larger university body
- Language institute or regular department
- Course numbering

Barriers continued

- Program-specific issues (e.g. room for electives)
- Articulation
- Job protection

Who sez?

- Position Statement on **Academic and Degree granting Credit for ESOL Courses** (TESOL Position Statement, October 2008)

- CATESOL Position Statement on **Degree-Applicable Credit ESL Courses in Community Colleges**, June 1994

- TESOL Member Resolution on **Granting Credit for ESL in Institutions of Higher Education** (1987)

Not all credits are the same

- Unassigned credits
- Assigned (e.g. language, general elective)
- Specific (e.g. 1st year ESL for Business Students)
- Graduate vs. undergraduate credit
- Transferability
- In many programs EAP is already "credit" for workload purposes, but this is not the same as academic credit.

Canada - examples

- University of Alberta- in the 9th level get 3 credits for 2 courses. ESL 140, 145 or ESL 550 - 6 credits

- Vancouver Island University- 3 unassigned credits for one course - elective credit

- University of Winnipeg- Once they have completed level 5, they get 3 credits in Business and 3 other unallocated credits.

Canada - examples

- Carlton University- credit given by individual faculties. 2 credits- helpful for GPA.

- University of Waterloo- once accepted into university they get a one course credit for ESL courses that they take concurrently with academic courses.

- University of Toronto- once accepted into university, students take a required yearlong ESL/history course for credit. Approved by Deans of Arts & Sciences.

Canada -examples

- University of Northern British Columbia- get 9 elective credits.

- University of Ottawa- B.A. with Major in ESL or a minor in ESL. ("credits galore") Students can combine these with other majors and minors.

U.S. – Noteworthy Findings

- Very different from state to state
- Many places have a long history of awarding ESL for some credit – dating to the early 1980s, and some to the 1970s
- Community colleges are much more likely to offer ESL for academic credit
- Difference between colleges and universities (strata/perceptions) – see CCs as having lower standards (e.g. U. of Iowa)

U.S. –continued

- As many as 18 credits can be awarded at some institutions (Utah State U., 18; U. of Iowa, 15)

- Regional bodies can play a big role
  - (e.g. all 12 community colleges in Connecticut worked through the ESL Council of the State of Connecticut to achieve for-credit status of some courses)

U.S. - continued

- Credit is typically not awarded as part of a graduate degree, but students can apply in some cases (e.g. Utah State)

- GPA (and academic ESL credit) count toward entrance GPA for program admission with positive effect on student engagement (e.g. Utah State)

- Different models:
  - e.g. University of Wisconsin Milwaukee - ESL elective credits for credit are housed as a stream/unit within the English Department

Strategies – a toolkit

- Build relationships
- Have patience
- Track success
- Student engagement (motivation)
- Use precedent

Continued

- Understand timelines & pathway
- How to differentiate between undergrad & grad students
- Compare course outlines

Questions/Roundtable Discussion

- Where do we (collectively) go from here?
- Ideas/suggestions?
- ???

Thank you for attending.

References

Benesch, S. (1993). ESL, Ideology, and the Politics of Pragmatism. *TESOL Quarterly, 27*(4), 705-717.

Bolton, J., & Montgomery Coll., R. (1990). *Revitalization of the ESL Program on the Rockville Campus of Montgomery College, and the Matter of Credit for ESL Courses*. Retrieved from ERIC database. \

Carro, G. (1999). Teaching Freshman History to ESL Students: A Model. Retrieved from ERIC database.

Dehghanpisheh, E. (1987). An Overview of Undergraduate ESL Program Models: A Comparison of Administrative Policies for International Students. *TESOL Quarterly, 21*(3), 570-577.

Malaspina University College (n.d.). *Proposal to grant academic credit for Foundation of English as a Second Language (FESL), the academic preparation level of ESL*. English as a Second Language Department.

Melles, G., Millar, G., Morton, J., & Fegan, S. (2005). Credit-Based Discipline Specific English for Academic Purposes Programmes in Higher Education: Revitalizing the Profession. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, *4*(3), 283-303. Retrieved from ERIC database.

Spurling, S., Seymour, S., Chisman, F., & Council for Advancement of Adult, L. (2008). Pathways & Outcomes: Tracking ESL Student Performance. A Longitudinal Study of Adult ESL Service at City College of San Francisco. *Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy*, Retrieved from ERIC database.

Van Meter, J., & Appalachian State Univ., B. (1990). Academic Credit for ESL Classes?. *Review of Research in Developmental Education*, *8*(1), Retrieved from ERIC database.

Williams, J. (n.d.). Building a Credit ESL Program in a University Context. Renison College: University of Waterloo.