THE ISSUES OF EAP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Virginija Tuomaitė
Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas, Lietuva | Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania

EAP (English for Academic Purposes) is a fast developing area of the English language teaching in Higher Education. There is a distinction often made between EGAP (English for General Academic Purposes) and ESAP (English for Specific Academic Purposes) (Blue, 1988). EGAP deals with the language and practices common to all EAP students, whereas ESAP is concerned with the specific needs of students in particular disciplines. However, the main objective of an EAP course is to teach the language, both general academic language and subject specific language as well as language related practices. The language of the learners' academic subject and language related study skills form the main component of the EAP skills classes. According to A. Gillet (2015) teaching EAP, therefore, involves developing in the learner the language and associated practices that they need in order to undertake study or work in English medium higher education. For that reason, it must start with the learner and the academic context in which they work or study. It is unlikely that a textbook will exist for such purposes, so it will always be necessary for the EAP teacher to be able to analyse contexts and language, understand learners' needs and develop materials that suit those contexts and needs.

The defining characteristics of EAP, that set it aside from other subjects in higher education, are its focus on the language and associated practices that leaners need in order to undertake study or work in higher education. What are students' skills and needs, and how teachers view students' skills and needs of EAP are the main issues to be discussed. Thus, the paper is aimed at presenting the description of the existing problem in the field, presenting the theoretical background for the research, the analysis of the research data and the discussion based on the results of the research data analysis.

The purpose of the empirical study was to find out students' self-evaluation of EAP skills in comparison how they see their importance for successful functioning in the academic context. Also, it was aimed at finding teachers' evaluation of students' skills in comparison with their importance as is viewed by the teachers. Thus, the following objectives were set: (1) to find out how higher education students assess their EAP skills; (2) to find out how teachers' assess students' EAP skills; (3) to find out how students see the importance of EAP skills; (4) to find out how teachers see the importance of EAP skills; (5) to compare the results and prepare recommendations for the EAP course curriculum innovations. The analysis of the research data and the discussion based on the results of the research data analysis will reveal recommendations for possible innovations in the curricula of EAP instruction aimed at higher education student foreign language competence development.