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Task-Based Language Teaching and English for Academic Purposes: An Investigation into Instructor Perceptions and Practice in the Canadian Context

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Abstract

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programs designed to meet postsecondary English language proficiency requirements are a common pathway to higher education for students from non-English-speaking backgrounds. Grounded in a Canadian context, this study seeks to examine the prevalence of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in EAP, common examples of EAP tasks and the benefits and drawbacks of this approach for EAP students. EAP professionals (n = 42) recruited from the membership of TESL Canada, and participants completed a questionnaire about their perceptions of TBLT for EAP. Of those who participated, 69% reported using TBLT in at least half of their lessons, with 86% of the participants indicating that TBLT was suitable for EAP instruction. Further qualitative analysis of the data revealed that presentations, essays, and interviews were the top three tasks employed by EAP teachers; the practicality, effectiveness, and learner-centredness of TBLT were its major benefits; and mismatched student expectations, lack of classroom time, and excessive instructor preparation were TBLT's major drawbacks. Ambiguity regarding what constitutes TBLT was also found in the data. It appears that TBLT is used by participants across Canada and is well accepted as a teaching approach. However, some conc

associated with TBLT in EAP remain to be addressed.

Les programmes d'anglais academique visant a combler les exigences en matiere de competences linguistiques pour l'anglais au postsecondaire representent souvent une voie vers les etudes postsecondaires pour les eleves allophones. Situee dans un contexte canadien, cette etude porte sur la prevalence de l'enseignement des langues base sur les taches (ELBT) dans les cours d'anglais academique, des exemples courants de taches dans ces cours, et les avantages et les inconvenients de cette approche pour les eleves. A partir des membres de TESL Canada, on a recrute des enseignants d'anglais academique (n = 42) et ceux-ci ont complete un questionnaire portant sur leurs perceptions de l'ELBT dans les cours d'anglais academique. Les resultats indiquent que 69% des participants emploient l'ELBT dans au moins la moitie de leurs lecons et que 86% jugent l'ELBT appropriee pour l'enseignement de l'anglais academique. Une analyse quantitative plus poussee a revele que les trois taches les plus frequemment employees par les enseignants d'anglais academique etaient les presentations, les redactions et les entrevues. En plus, les participants ont indique qu'ils estimaient que les atouts principaux de l'ELBT etaient son aspect pratique, son efficacite et le fait qu'il est centre sur l'apprenant; comme inconvenients majeurs, ils ont note une inadequation des attentes de la part des etudiants, l'insuffisance des heures de cours et la formation excessive des enseignants. Les donnees ont egalement revele une certaine ambiguite par rapport a ce qui constitue l'ELBT. Il parait que l'ELBT est employe partout au Canada et est bien accueilli comme methode d'enseignement; toutefois, il faudrait aborder certaines preoccupations quant a son emploi dans l'enseignement de l'anglais academique.

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