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A Moves-Steps Approach to Teaching EAP from Disciplinary Textbooks: A Case from American Studies

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Abstract. Classroom application of a moves-steps analysis to textbooks allows the EAP practitioner to use authentic content from textbooks in different disciplines in the EAP classroom. First, the communicative purpose of moves and steps is reinterpreted as student learning outcomes (SLOs). Guided by the SLOs, EAP pedagogy can then focus on how the moves and steps are achieved toward helping students acquire the (pedagogical) discourse of the discipline. Converting moves and steps to SLOs also helps the general ESL practitioner become more familiar with this EAP perspective on disciplinary content facilitating the transition from general ESL to EAP (e.g., Campion 2016). Although the context for this paper is a university pathway program, the practice was also carried out in the university's Intensive English Program (IEP) making the practice relevant to different contexts. Strengths and limitations are included.

Keywords: *EAP, discipline-specific, research to practice, moves, steps, textbooks, genre, student learning outcomes (SLOs), American Studies*

Introduction

Approximately ten years ago, a group of EAP practitioners in a university Intensive English Program (IEP) began developing an approach to teaching academic English from chapters of textbooks in the sciences, humanities, and social sciences.¹ The approach came from perceived needs of advanced IEP students. Students needed the ability to use English to *access, understand, recreate, and critically discuss/question* disciplinary content typically encountered in first- and second-year textbooks. The EAP instructors continued to refine this approach, with the acronym *AURC*, in a pathway program the university introduced a few years later.² The practice discussed here is from the pathway program.³

Developed independently, *AURC* systematized Kaspar's (2000) observation that "[b]eing successful in an English-speaking academic environment requires that ESL students be ... able to use English to access, understand, articulate, and critically analyze conceptual relationships within, between, and among a wide variety of content areas" (p. 3). Nesi and Gardner (2012) captured Kaspar's observation and the centrality of the textbook in a quote from a biology lecturer, "...[t]he student must understand the current state of knowledge and how it was acquired and be able to explain it. In year one, you can find everything you need to know from the textbook" (p.59).

As the IEP instructors continued to teach EAP from entire chapters of disciplinary textbooks, issues remained concerning how to teach academic English from material intended to introduce the content of a discipline rather than teach English for academic purposes. A pedagogy that exploited textbook design emerged with a component approximating the communicative purpose of moves and steps found in textbooks. Unfortunately, the pathway program closed before data on the efficacy of this approach could be collected. Moreover, curricula in the IEP changed and no longer

¹ See Berardo and Smith Herrod (2014) for discussion on using an anthology for EAP.

² For more on *AURC*, see Berardo and Smith-Herrod (2015).

³ For more about the university's pathway program see [Issues in Language Instruction \(2015\) The Kansas University Academic Accelerator Program](#).

incorporated textbook chapters typically used in first- and second-year courses. Instructors had no input on these two events. Therefore, the approach suggested here is theory-based and steeped in practical experience from the IEP and pathway program.

EAP and the Pathway Program

A small team of experienced IEP instructors was asked to teach in a new university pathway program developed with a private recruiter to accelerate the transition of newly arrived international students to sophomore status in twelve months.⁴ The international students tested into the program at the level of B1 – B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Students in the program were enrolled in standalone EAP classes and first- and second-year classes. Some of the first- and second-year classes were also linked to other EAP courses.

IEP faculty had no influence in how the pathway program would be organized. Moreover, IEP instructors also had no prior experience teaching in a pathway program and little time to transition from general ESL to EAP. In addition, IEP faculty members were asked to teach academic English relevant to disciplinary content not in their areas of expertise. The task was to figure out how and the onus was on the IEP faculty. Challenges discussed in Campion (2016) such as how to negotiate discipline-specific content were immediate. Moreover, the ESL instructors felt they lacked the knowledge, ability, and confidence to teach EAP courses that corresponded with first- and second-year university courses. This feeling of insecurity among ESL instructors was also described in de Chazal (2014, p. 11).

To illustrate the challenges and the application of moves-steps analysis in EAP practice, this article focuses on one EAP course that was paired with a humanities class designed for the pathway program. The humanities class, American Studies, examined race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability through 100 years of American film. The main textbook for the course exceeded 400 pages. The textbook was *America on Film* by Benshoff and Griffen (2009). The American Studies department added a 500-page supplemental anthology for rigor (Andersen and Collins, 2016).⁵ The anthology offered short essays with titles such as *Systems of Power and Inequity* and *The Construction of Black Masculinity: White Supremacy Now and Then*. The reading material presented the international students with unfamiliar perspectives expressed by an equally unfamiliar discourse. The books were insightful but left serious questions about teaching academic English relevant to this American Studies class. One need was clear; the newly arrived undergraduate students had to engage with challenging and voluminous texts.

The Undergraduate Textbook

Undergraduate textbooks play a key role in offering an initial understanding of the discipline's subject matter and perspectives (Hyland 2009, p. 112). Specific to EAP is that “the principles of composition and design [of textbooks] are meant to favour understanding and acquisition of concepts, which turns them into potentially useful tools for the learning of academic language” (Bondi 2016, p. 331). Although textbooks do not provide good examples for argumentative writing, “the moves and lexico-grammar of textbooks ... play a major role in the development of reading skills and the building-up of the first academic vocabulary” (Bondi 2016, p. 331). Multiword constructions have also been studied in university textbooks, identifying language that is “more grounded in student reality...” (Wood and Appel 2014, p. 2).

An immediate question for the EAP practitioner about textbooks from other disciplines is what to do about the content. The view taken here is that EAP practitioners should engage with textbook content by approaching the material from the knowledge base of EAP, which includes Systemic Functional Linguistics, genre theory (moves-steps), corpus linguistics, academic literacies, and critical EAP (Ding and Bruce 2017, pp. 65-84). Below, disciplinary textbooks are viewed through the lens of genre theory, specifically as a series of moves and steps.

⁴ See Winkle (2014) for more on ESL and pathway programs.

⁵ Although American Studies instructors required much reading, students were not required to read the books in their entirety. See Anderson (2015) for variation in numbers of pages of required reading across disciplines.

Moves-Steps and Student Learning Outcomes

Moves analysis in academic genres originates with Swales (1990; 2004), who defined a move as “a discoursal or rhetorical unit that performs a coherent communicative function in written or spoken discourse” (2004, p. 228). This line of research has been so fruitful that Swales (2019) suggested it may be time to limit publications of descriptions of moves-steps, while recognizing that the application of “move-step assignments can be a very useful vehicle” to teach aspects of academic genres (p. 77). To continue to develop the utility of moves-steps for the EAP classroom, the communicative purpose of moves-steps is reinterpreted as student learning outcomes (SLOs), which can be a useful tool for guiding EAP instruction from discipline-specific textbooks.

Parodi (2010; 2014) applied moves-steps analysis to 126 Spanish language textbooks in four disciplines: Social Work, Psychology, Industrial Chemistry, and Construction Engineering. Parodi’s work revealed three macro-moves: *Preamble*, *Conceptualization and Exercising* and *Corollary*. Each macro-move consists of moves. For example, the macro-move *Conceptualization and Exercising* consists of the three moves: *Concept Definition*, *Practice*, and *Recapitulation*. The focus here is on the macro-move *Conceptualization and Exercising*, which is central to the textbook’s function (Parodi, 2010, p. 206). The move *Concept Definition* is central to the macro-move and is used below to show how EAP pedagogy can incorporate move-steps analysis.

Table 1
The Move-Steps for Concept Definition with Communicative Purpose

<u>Move and Steps</u>	<u>Communicative Purpose</u>
Move: Concept Definition	To describe and explain processes, objects, or others
Step 1. Linking Concepts	To link new concepts or procedures with those of one or more preceding articles
Step 2. Presenting the Topic Nucleus	To describe and define the object, concept, or procedure under study, often accompanied by drawings, figures, tables, or formulae
Step 3. Specifying Components of Sections	To subclassify or divide the concept of procedure under study into parts, with descriptions and definitions of types, parts, or components

Note. The move and three steps for Concept Definition as presented in Parodi (2010, p. 211).

The Move-Steps for Concept Definition

The move *Concept Definition* along with the steps that perform the move are given in Table 1. To simplify discussion, the example below only targets Step 2. EAP practitioners can make pedagogical use of the communicative purpose of the move and Step 2 by converting the purpose to an SLO as shown below.⁶

Communicative Purpose of Concept Definition and Step 2 as SLO

The student will be able to describe, explain, and/or define the object, concept, or procedure under study, often accompanied by drawings, figures, tables, or formulae.

The wording of the derived SLO is unsurprisingly broad and vague (e.g., object, concept, procedure under study) since the move and steps are derived from a large-scale study reflecting differences across disciplines (Parodi, 2014). Adaptation of the SLO for the specific discipline and textbook is needed. An example for the American Studies textbook, *America on Film*, is shown below.

⁶ For an insightful discussion on SLOs in foreign language instruction see Norris (2006).

Adaptation of SLO to America on Film

The student will be able to describe, explain, and/or define representations of race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and ability in US film history with the aid of chronological organization and movie still shots.

The adapted SLO reflects the textbook’s specific concepts (race/ethnicity, class, gender, etc.), the organization style (chronological organization to reflect film history), and the accompanying visual representations, which are primarily movie still shots rather than drawings, figures, tables, or formulae.

SLO and Chronology

To meet the SLO, students will need to organize their descriptions, explanations, and/or definitions chronologically. To illustrate, consider representations of Italian Americans in US film history. As shown in Table 2, this ethnic group is presented as stereotypes starting with immigrants from the “great surge” of Italian immigration in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and ending with the representation of Italian Americans in a TV series from the early 21st century.

Table 2
Italian Stereotypes in US Film History

Historical Stereotypes	Description
Simple-minded working-class man (earliest depictions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assimilationist small businessman; named Luigi, Carmine, or Guido • Broken English • Bushy mustache • Gracious smile • Street vendor, cranked a street organ, ran a small café
Socialist radical or anarchist (earliest depictions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Battles against white America rather than assimilating • Dark-skinned antagonist loses to heroic white men
Male Latin Lover (1920’s) Female Latin Lover (1950’s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handsome, exotic, and sexually alluring • Appeal comes from a sense of “Otherness” • Bold and aggressive and potentially violent in sexual passion • Women lovers expressing earthiness and sensuality
Mafia Gangster (1930’s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ruthless, corrupt, ultra-violent, mobsters
World War II Propaganda Characters and Post war years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patriotism and loyalty to America during war with Italy, Germany, and Japan • Musical performers
Gangster and Working class man (1970’s-1990’s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobsters and violent gang members • Working-class men struggling to achieve the American dream

To help students meet the SLO, the instructor can have students identify language that expresses time in the section’s 10 paragraphs. Once identified, the instructor can help students note that time expressions appear chronologically from the first paragraph of the chapter’s section (“early 1800’s”) to the last (“contemporary Hollywood”). Also noteworthy is that temporal phrases often appear in the first sentence of the paragraph making it easy for readers to follow the historical changes. Other time expressions in the body paragraphs identify movies and their release dates. Two key grammar structures are prepositional phrases and noun phrases. Examples are given in Table 3.

Table 3
Expressions of Time by Paragraph

<u>Paragraph</u>	<u>Times Expressions in First Sentences</u>	<u>Time Expressions in Body Paragraphs</u>
1	During the early 1800's...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...the final years of the nineteenth century • ...by 1900... • Until the late 1800's... • ...popular media of the day...
2	One of the earliest of those stereotypical representations...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Throughout the decades • To this day... • ...as in the film <i>Kiss me Guido</i> (1997) • ...<i>Super Mario Brothers</i> (1993)
3	...could eventually be assimilated..	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...during the first decades of the twentieth century... • In film of the era...
4	By the 1920's...	<p>...who appeared in films such as <i>The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse</i> (1921) and <i>The Sheik</i> (1921)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...began to proliferate...in the press in the earliest years of the century • During the Prohibition era (1919-1933)...
5	By the early 1930's...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...in the early 1930's... • <i>Little Ceasar</i> (1930) • ...followed by <i>Scarface</i> (1932) • Throughout the 1930's and continuing for decades...
6	... began to emerge during and after World War II...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...war movies made during these years, such as <i>Sahara</i> (1943), <i>The Purple Heart</i> (1944), <i>Back to Bataan</i> (1945) and <i>The Story of G.I. Joe</i> (1945) • In the postwar years...
7	Postwar film making...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consequently, 1950's American film... • Like that of the 1920's Latin Lover... • ...swept the Oscars in 1955...
8	During the 1960's and 1970's...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...during the 1960's... • ...<i>Please Don't Eat the Daisies</i> (1960) • ...<i>the Thrill of It All</i> (1963)
9	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Francis Ford Coppola's <i>the Godfather</i> (1972) • ...spawning two sequels (1974 and 1990). • Scorsese's ... films most movegoers recall: <i>Mean Streets</i> (1973), <i>Goodfellas</i> (1990), and <i>Casino</i> (1995) • ...other films from this era • <i>Rocky</i> (1976) • <i>Saturday Night Fever</i> (1977) • ...used his Godfather films (especially <i>Part II [1974]</i>) to indict...
10	...remain in contemporary Hollywood film.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ... (as in <i>Moonstruck</i> [1988]) ... • ...or as mobsters (as in <i>The Untouchables</i> [1988]) • ...or as the cable TV series <i>the Sopranos</i> [1999-2007])

Note. Time phrases, movie names, and dates can be used to help students recognize how Italian stereotypes are organized chronologically.

Once the time expressions and grammar structures are discussed, students can identify characterizations of Italian stereotypes for each period. (See Table 3.) Students may need time to engage with unfamiliar vocabulary such as *bushy mustache*, *cranked a street organ*, *dark-skinned antagonist*, and a *sense of “Otherness.”* Once comfortable with the vocabulary and the chronology, students can move on to examine movie still shots that accompany the stereotypes.

SLO and Movie Still Shots

The SLO is also met through movie still shots that represent ethnicity. To illustrate this, consider the section on Italians in American cinema, which only includes one still shot. The image is from the 1930’s movie *Little Caesar* shown in Figure 1, where we see a short man, nicely dressed, standing by a store window with bullet holes. The man is holding his arm apparently after being shot.

Figure 1

Scene from the movie Little Caesar (1930) portraying an Italian American mobster.



Note. The depiction of an Italian American gangster can be used to define and describe the stereotype.

To show they are meeting the SLO, students would have to use the image to help define, explain, or describe the stereotype. To raise further awareness of the use of visuals as an aid, students may also be asked to explain why this particular image might have been chosen. An activity could begin with a description of the image followed by discussions based on questions and prompts such as those given below.

- Describe the man. Consider what he is wearing and what he is doing. What is he thinking?
- What race/ethnicity is portrayed? How do you know? Which stereotype is portrayed in the picture? Explain.
- Why did this happen to the man? How is this related to the stereotype?
- Why do you think this particular image was used?

Written and oral assessments of the SLO would target the students’ ability to describe, explain, define, and/or otherwise characterize Italian American stereotypes chronologically in US film history while incorporating the still shot.

Some Strengths and Limitations of Moves-Steps Applied to Textbooks

In this section, some strengths and limitations of applying a moves-steps approach in the EAP classroom are considered. The discussion below can be used to help practitioners argue for using disciplinary textbooks in the EAP classroom by approaching the textbook as a genre with moves and steps.

Pragmatic EAP

The application of textbook moves and steps in EAP could be characterized as pragmatic EAP or as “a skills-based, instrumental approach that attempts to make students aware of the dominant conventions in Anglo-American writing...” (Harwood and Hadley, 2004 p. 356). Although they argue for *critical* pragmatic EAP, Harwood and Hadley concede that “[a] pragmatic approach can provide a helpful framework for undergraduates beginning to come to terms with the practices of academic writing” (2004, p. 360). Pragmatic EAP, however, remains open to familiar critiques from Academic Literacies and Critical EAP dating back to Lea and Street (1998) and more recently recounted in Helmer (2013) who claimed that “this pragmatism can also lead EAP programs to unreflectively accommodate to externally imposed demands and institutional structures” (p. 274). Accommodating to “externally imposed demands and institutional structures” reduces teacher autonomy and curtails academic freedom of speech.

Although the application of moves analysis to textbooks is open to such criticism, another way to view it is as *academic socialization* as summarized by Storch, Morton, and Thompson (2016, p. 479). Academic socialization of EAP centers on the text as a means for engaging with the academic community. In this case, students learn that the textbook genre is composed of moves-steps that carry out functions. Students learn to respond to the communicative purpose of moves with discipline-specific content as they begin to acquire the discourse community’s language use and perspectives as introduced in textbooks.

Lack of Expertise

The focus on moves-steps allows practitioners to teach EAP from discipline-specific textbooks while remaining on familiar territory of the EAP knowledge base. While highly practical and useful as part of a larger pedagogical repertoire, it can, however, be shallow if the instructor is not able to specialize in the rhetorical organization of academic genres. This is a serious limitation because it risks a familiar critique restated (and countered) in Hyland (2018), which is that EAP instructors are “outsiders who lack the expertise, knowledge, and self-assurance to understand and teach disciplinary discourses...” (p. 386). In fact, incorporating textbook moves-steps into pedagogy requires expertise and knowledge of applied linguistics, a home for EAP instructors and a scientific domain for the investigation of discourse and genre organization.

Textbook-Centric

The focus on the textbook is both a strength and limitation. Studies such as Miller (2011) revealed that language use in introductory university textbooks differs from vocabulary and grammar in ESL textbooks. Adopting university textbooks as a central component of EAP courses, then, provides the student with language more representative of reading assignments for non-ESL classes. However, studies such as Paxton (2007) found that textbook language differs from other literacy practices in the discipline. Therefore, heavy reliance on the textbook for a language source will not expose students to the discipline’s other pedagogical and non-pedagogical literacy practices such as the research paper.

Conclusion

The transition from general ESL to EAP is not automatic. EAP practitioners are faced with serious questions about how to teach academic English defined by disciplines across academia. The situation intensifies as universities create partnerships with external entities that require an ESL component to integrate in specific ways with no resources devoted to EAP specialization. Fortunately, the EAP knowledge base offers solutions that can be adapted to new situations. As shown here, a moves-steps analysis of textbooks, perhaps the most ubiquitous academic genre for first-year university students, can be used in EAP pedagogy. Although there are limitations, this EAP practice allows practitioners to be grounded in their profession and adapt to ongoing changes alongside their colleagues in other fields.

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