

## **Exploring discourse competence elements in EAP class presentations through document and ethnographic analyses**

### **Abstract**

Conducting class presentation at the tertiary level is an inherently complex endeavor for ESL learners taking EAP courses. They are confronted with tasks that require them to search for information; select relevant sources; read and write highly conventionalized academic genres; and present findings in an academic presentation. Presenting an essay assignment, for instance, requires learners to exercise a developed level of discourse competence in order to produce a well-organised essay. This study presents a qualitative document analysis of the essay marking schedule, course textbook, and course syllabus of a blended EAP course in Malaysia, in order to uncover the elements of discourse competence knowledge that relate to meeting the requirements of the essay assignment presentation for the course. The study also employs an ethnographic analysis of participant (teachers and students) interviews, pertaining to the process of the essay presentation. In addition to the interviews, the study also utilises class observations as part of the ethnographic analysis. The combination of both textual (document) and ethnographic (interview) methods utilised in this study is termed a textographic approach (see Swales, 1998; Paltridge, 2008, ). Both document and ethnographic data are analysed using template analysis (see King, 1998; 2004). The findings of the study suggest that there are three types of discourse competence knowledge underpinning the oral presentation of the essay assignment: public speaking, use of oral presentation structure, and linguistic knowledge. The implications of the study are threefold: first, students should develop the ability to exercise discourse competence to enable them to present their essay findings more accurately and appropriately; secondly, teachers should have a sound understanding of the discourse competence knowledge in order to help their students to develop and exercise discourse competence; and lastly, syllabus designers need to have a clear conceptualisation of the types of discourse competence knowledge that need to be integrated within the oral presentation section of a syllabus which takes into account all of the types of knowledge engaged in academic presentation.