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Bridging Academic and Workplace English in India: EAP-EOP Transition Challenges and a Culturally Responsive Curriculum Framework

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ABSTRACT

The transition from English for Academic Purposes (EAP) to English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) requires learners to adapt academic language knowledge to workplace genres, registers, relationships, and intercultural expectations. This study investigates the transitional competence gap among Indian learners and proposes a culturally responsive curriculum framework. Using a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, data were collected from 200 learners across four Indian regions through structured questionnaires, open-ended responses, and eight semi-structured interviews. Quantitative analysis compared difficulties involving idiomatic expressions, formal writing, professional register, intercultural competence, and overall EAP-EOP transition. Qualitative analysis examined register discontinuity, pragmatic challenges, rhetorical mismatch, and the absence of structured transitional support. Results showed that EAP learners experienced greater difficulty with idiomatic expressions and formal writing, whereas EOP learners reported higher difficulty with professional register and intercultural competence. Both groups perceived the transition as demanding, confirming that academic proficiency does not automatically transfer to workplace performance. The qualitative findings further revealed difficulties in adapting tone, condensing academic information, communicating across hierarchies, and managing culturally different expectations. The study proposes a three-stage framework comprising EAP foundations, transitional competence training, and occupation-specific EOP preparation, with emphasis on genre transfer, register flexibility, pragmatic instruction, intercultural simulation, and performance-based assessment for learners.

INTRODUCTION

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) prepare learners for two related but communicatively distinct environments. EAP develops the language and discourse practices required in higher education, including critical reading, academic writing, argumentation, citation, seminar participation, and disciplinary presentation (Hyland, 2006). EOP prepares learners for workplace communication through professional correspondence, report writing, meetings, negotiation, teamwork, presentations, and occupation-specific interaction (Hutchinson and Waters 1987; Basturkmen, 2010). Although both belong to English for Specific Purposes, competence developed in one domain does not automatically transfer to the other.

The transition from academic to professional English involves more than replacing academic vocabulary with workplace terminology. Academic discourse commonly values evidence-based argument, disciplinary conventions, cautious claims, and explicit engagement with sources. Workplace discourse is often more immediate, action-oriented, audience-sensitive, and shaped by organisational roles. A learner who can produce a well-structured academic essay may therefore remain uncertain when writing a concise professional email, participating in a meeting, negotiating responsibilities, or adapting a message for colleagues from different cultural backgrounds. The transition requires learners to

reorganise how they select language, construct authority, manage interpersonal relationships, and respond to communicative purposes.

Genre and register are central to this discontinuity. EAP learners encounter essays, research reports, literature reviews, and academic presentations, whereas EOP learners must manage proposals, technical reports, workplace emails, interviews, and professional briefings. Each genre is governed by different expectations concerning structure, tone, directness, evidence, and audience. Needs-based ESP scholarship recognises that language instruction should reflect the communicative requirements of target settings (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998). Nevertheless, many educational programmes continue to teach academic and occupational English as separate stages, with limited support for transferring competence between them.

Pragmatic and intercultural competence create additional difficulties. Professional effectiveness depends not only on grammatical accuracy but also on knowing how to make requests, disagree, negotiate, apologise, offer criticism, and communicate across hierarchical relationships. Pragmatic failure may occur when an utterance is linguistically correct but interpreted as excessively direct, vague, deferential, or inappropriate within a particular context (Thomas, 1983). In culturally diverse workplaces, learners must also interpret differing expectations concerning politeness, status, turn-taking,

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non-verbal behaviour, and relationship management (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). Consequently, occupational readiness requires cultural and pragmatic knowledge that conventional academic English instruction may not explicitly develop.

These challenges are particularly relevant in India, where learners move between multilingual educational settings and increasingly diverse professional environments. Academic English instruction often emphasises examinations, formal writing, and textbook-based knowledge, while authentic workplace communication may receive less systematic attention. Learners may complete secondary or university education with considerable knowledge of English grammar and academic conventions but limited experience of professional genres, spontaneous interaction, or intercultural problem-solving. The resulting gap is not simply a deficiency in proficiency; it is a discontinuity between the communicative practices taught in educational institutions and those expected in occupational settings.

Existing EAP and EOP scholarship provides extensive guidance on academic discourse, needs analysis, genre, and workplace communication. However, comparatively less attention has been given to the pedagogical bridge between the two domains, particularly in Indian educational contexts. Studies often examine academic writing or professional communication independently, leaving unclear how learners experience the movement from one discourse environment to the other. A curriculum that treats EAP and EOP as disconnected areas may therefore fail to prepare learners for the changing linguistic, pragmatic, and cultural demands encountered during educational and professional progression.

The present study addresses this gap by examining EAP-EOP transition challenges among Indian learners through a mixed-methods design. It focuses specifically on differences in communicative demands, difficulties involving idiomatic expression, formal writing, professional register, and intercultural competence, and learners' perceptions of the support provided by existing programmes. The analysis is subsequently used to develop a culturally responsive curriculum framework that connects academic competence with workplace communication without reproducing a single culturally dominant model.

The study addresses three research questions:

1. What communicative challenges distinguish EAP learning from EOP learning among Indian participants?
 2. How do register, genre, pragmatic conventions, and intercultural competence shape the transition from academic to professional English?
 3. How can EAP and EOP curricula be connected through a culturally responsive transitional framework?
- By answering these questions, the study conceptualises the transitional competence gap as a distinct pedagogical problem. It contributes to English for Specific Purposes research by shifting attention from separate descriptions of academic and occupational English toward the

processes through which learners transfer, adapt, and reconstruct communicative competence across the two domains. The thesis identifies this gap through both domain-specific challenge scores and the qualitative theme of register discontinuity, providing the empirical basis for the present paper.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic and Occupational English as Distinct Discourse Domains

EAP and EOP share a needs-oriented foundation within English for Specific Purposes, but they prepare learners for different communicative purposes. EAP develops participation in higher education through academic reading, evidence-based writing, citation, seminar discussion, and discipline-specific argumentation (Hyland, 2006). EOP focuses on communication required in occupational settings, including professional correspondence, workplace reports, meetings, negotiation, teamwork, and presentations (Hutchinson and Waters 1987; Basturkmen, 2010).

The distinction is not simply between academic and technical vocabulary. Academic discourse generally requires extended explanation, engagement with evidence, cautious claims, and adherence to disciplinary conventions. Workplace communication is often shorter, more immediate, action-oriented, and adapted to specific organisational audiences. Academic success may therefore demonstrate competence in one discourse environment without ensuring readiness for another.

This difference is especially important where language programmes treat EAP as sufficient preparation for employment. Learners may become familiar with essays, examinations, and research reports while receiving little explicit instruction in professional emails, workplace briefings, interviews, or collaborative problem-solving. The resulting difficulty reflects a gap between the communicative practices developed in educational institutions and those expected in professional environments.

Genre, Register, and the Transfer of Competence

Genre provides a central framework for understanding the EAP-EOP transition. Genres are socially recognised ways of using language to achieve particular purposes within discourse communities (Swales, 1990). Academic genres include essays, literature reviews, research articles, and seminar presentations, whereas occupational genres include proposals, technical reports, business correspondence, meeting contributions, and professional briefings.

Each genre has characteristic expectations concerning organisation, tone, evidence, directness, and audience. A research paper may require detailed contextualisation and cautious interpretation, whereas a workplace report may prioritise concise findings and immediate recommendations. Similarly, an academically appropriate style may appear unnecessarily elaborate in a professional

email, while the directness expected in workplace communication may be judged insufficiently developed in academic writing.

Register further complicates transfer. EAP commonly emphasises formal, impersonal, and hedged expression. EOP requires greater flexibility because learners must shift between formal reports, concise emails, collaborative discussion, persuasive presentation, and interpersonal interaction. Professional competence therefore depends on the capacity to select language according to purpose, audience, organisational role, and communicative urgency. Genre knowledge acquired in EAP can support EOP development, but transfer is not automatic. Learners require explicit opportunities to compare academic and occupational texts, identify changes in communicative purpose, and reformulate the same information for different audiences. Without such mediation, they may interpret workplace English as an entirely unfamiliar system rather than an adaptable extension of their existing competence.

Pragmatic and Intercultural Competence

The transition also requires pragmatic competence: the ability to express meaning appropriately within a particular social and professional context. Thomas (1983) defines pragmatic failure as a situation in which grammatically acceptable language produces misunderstanding because the speaker and listener interpret directness, politeness, or intention differently.

In professional contexts, learners must perform speech acts such as requesting, disagreeing, refusing, correcting, negotiating, and giving feedback. Their effectiveness depends not only on linguistic accuracy but also on sensitivity to hierarchy, interpersonal distance, and organisational expectations. Excessive indirectness may obscure an intended message, while direct communication may be perceived as impolite or confrontational.

Intercultural competence extends this requirement by preparing learners to communicate with people whose assumptions about status, time, politeness, and relationship management differ from their own. Spencer-Oatey (2008) emphasises that intercultural communication involves both information exchange and the management of social relationships. EOP instruction must therefore help learners recognise multiple communicative norms rather than simply imitate a single native-speaker model. For Indian learners, this competence is particularly significant because professional communication may involve interaction across regional, linguistic, and international boundaries. Explicit instruction in pragmatic choices, supported by workplace scenarios and reflective analysis, can help learners distinguish between culturally informed variation and actual communicative inadequacy.

The Transitional Competence Gap

This study conceptualises the transitional competence gap as the distance between the communicative abilities developed through academic English instruction and

those required for effective workplace participation. It comprises four interconnected dimensions:

1. Genre transfer-adapting knowledge from academic to occupational texts;
2. Register flexibility-adjusting tone, formality, and directness;
3. Pragmatic competence-using language appropriately within workplace relationships; and
4. Intercultural competence-negotiating differing cultural expectations.

The framework assumes that transition is not a one-time movement from education to employment. It is a process of adaptation in which learners reconstruct existing linguistic knowledge for new audiences and purposes. Curriculum design should therefore include an explicit transitional stage linking academic discourse with professional communication.

This position is supported by the thesis findings: EAP learners reported greater difficulty with idiomatic expression and formal writing conventions, whereas EOP learners experienced greater difficulty with professional register and intercultural competence. The qualitative theme of register discontinuity further showed that learners experienced the transition as a reorganisation of communicative identity rather than a simple change in vocabulary. The proposed curriculum framework consequently treats genre transfer, pragmatic development, workplace simulation, and intercultural preparation as connected components of transitional competence.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design and Analytical Focus

The study employed a cross-sectional sequential explanatory mixed-methods design in which quantitative findings were interpreted through qualitative evidence (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017). The full dataset comprised survey responses from 200 learners and follow-up interviews with a purposively selected subsample. Unlike analyses centred on regional or demographic inequalities, the present paper focused exclusively on the transition between academic and occupational English.

For this purpose, responses were organised according to participants' reported EAP or EOP learning orientation. The analysis examined differences in perceived difficulty across academic and professional communicative domains and identified the forms of support learners considered necessary for transferring competence from educational to workplace contexts.

Participants and Data Collection

Participants were recruited from English-medium educational settings across Northern, Eastern, Southern, and North-Eastern India. The sample included learners at high-school, undergraduate, and postgraduate levels who had prior exposure to academic or occupational English instruction. Data were collected through Google Forms between April and August 2022.

The structured questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very low difficulty) to 5 (very high difficulty). The present analysis drew on items measuring five transition-related domains:

1. idiomatic expressions;
2. formal writing conventions;
3. professional register;
4. intercultural competence; and
5. overall difficulty in moving from EAP to EOP.

Participants also completed open-ended items describing their experiences of academic and workplace English and suggesting improvements to existing language programmes.

To obtain more detailed evidence, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight participants, with two selected from each region. The interviews explored differences between academic and occupational communication, difficulties adapting language to workplace audiences, experiences of professional hierarchy, and perceptions of curriculum support. Interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes and were transcribed verbatim.

Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis

Quantitative analysis was conducted using Python 3.9. Means and standard deviations were calculated for each challenge domain. EAP and EOP profiles were compared to determine whether the two learner groups experienced different patterns of communicative difficulty. One-way analysis of variance was used where appropriate, with statistical significance assessed at $p < 0.05$ and eta squared used to estimate effect size.

Regional profiles were examined only to determine whether the principal EAP-EOP challenge pattern remained consistent across different Indian contexts. Regional, gender, and urban-rural inequalities were not treated as primary outcomes in this paper.

Open-ended responses and interview transcripts were analysed using the six-stage thematic-analysis procedure proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Coding concentrated on four theoretically relevant categories:

1. register and genre discontinuity;
2. pragmatic and intercultural difficulty;
3. rhetorical mismatch between educational and workplace expectations; and
4. absence of structured transitional support.

A second coder independently reviewed 20% of the qualitative material. Inter-coder agreement was assessed using Cohen's kappa, and disagreements were resolved through discussion. Quantitative and qualitative findings were then integrated through side-by-side comparison.

Development of the Curriculum Framework

The proposed curriculum framework was developed through an evidence-synthesis procedure rather than tested as an instructional intervention. Quantitative

challenge profiles were mapped against the qualitative themes and interpreted using established EAP, EOP, genre, pragmatic, and intercultural-communication scholarship.

The resulting framework was designed around three connected stages: differentiated EAP preparation, a transitional competence module, and context-specific EOP preparation. The framework therefore represents an empirically informed curriculum proposal whose effectiveness requires future experimental or longitudinal evaluation. The thesis confirms that the transition analysis was based on domain-specific challenge scores, including an overall EAP mean of 3.67, an EOP mean of 3.82, and qualitative evidence concerning register discontinuity and limited transitional support.

Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained before data collection. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw and of the procedures used to protect confidentiality. Personal identifiers were replaced with participant codes. Separate consent was obtained for recording the interviews, and the recordings were deleted after transcription.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Contrasting EAP and EOP Challenge Profiles

The aggregated results showed that EAP and EOP learners experienced different configurations of communicative difficulty. EAP learners reported greater difficulty with idiomatic expressions and formal writing conventions, whereas EOP learners experienced greater difficulty with professional register and intercultural competence. The pattern remained consistent across the four regional subsamples, indicating that the difference was not restricted to one educational context.

Idiomatic expressions produced the highest reported EAP difficulty, with a mean score of 3.89 on the five-point scale. Formal writing conventions also presented a substantial challenge ($M = 3.42$). Participants' qualitative responses indicated that these difficulties involved more than unfamiliar vocabulary. Learners described uncertainty regarding figurative meaning, context-dependent language, explicit thesis construction, critical engagement with sources, and expectations concerning the direct organisation of academic arguments.

For EOP learners, intercultural competence was the most difficult domain ($M = 3.95$). Participants reported uncertainty when communicating across differences in hierarchy, directness, politeness, professional status, and cultural expectations. Professional register was also rated more difficult by EOP learners than by EAP learners. Respondents particularly referred to challenges in writing concise professional emails, adapting tone for senior colleagues, participating in meetings, and balancing clarity with politeness.

Table 1: EAP and EOP challenge profiles

Communicative domain	Group reporting greater difficulty	Principal difficulty identified
Idiomatic expressions	EAP learners	Interpreting context-dependent and figurative meanings
Formal writing conventions	EAP learners	Constructing direct arguments and engaging critically with sources
Professional register	EOP learners	Adjusting tone, concision, formality, and workplace directness
Intercultural competence	EOP learners	Managing hierarchy, politeness, and culturally different expectations
EAP-EOP transition	Both groups	Transferring competence between academic and professional contexts

Overall Transitional Difficulty

Both participant groups rated the transition between academic and occupational English as difficult. The overall transition-difficulty mean was 3.67 for EAP-oriented learners and 3.82 for EOP-oriented learners. The higher EOP score suggests that the limitations of academic preparation became particularly visible when learners attempted to communicate in professional settings.

The difference between the two scores was less important than their shared location in the upper range of the scale. Both groups perceived a substantial discontinuity between the English taught for academic achievement and that required for workplace participation. EAP learners anticipated difficulty in applying academic knowledge professionally, while EOP learners reported experiencing this difficulty in workplace-oriented tasks.

Participants did not describe the transition as a simple need to learn additional technical terminology. Instead, they emphasised changes in communicative purpose. Academic writing was associated with explanation, evidence, citation, and extended argument, whereas workplace communication required brevity, immediate relevance, action, interpersonal sensitivity, and rapid adjustment to audience expectations.

Register and Genre Discontinuity

Register discontinuity was identified in 44 qualitative responses, making it the most prominent transition-specific theme. Participants frequently experienced academic and occupational English as separate systems rather than connected forms of communication. One representative response described academic writing and professional email as feeling like “entirely different languages.”

Three forms of discontinuity were particularly evident. First, learners found it difficult to reduce extended academic explanations into concise workplace messages. Second, they were uncertain about selecting an appropriate level of formality when addressing colleagues, supervisors, clients, or unfamiliar professionals. Third, they experienced difficulty transferring information between genres, such as transforming an essay into a briefing, a research finding into a recommendation, or an

academic presentation into a workplace proposal.

These findings indicate that learners possessed elements of relevant linguistic competence but lacked explicit instruction in how to reorganise that competence for new communicative purposes. Transfer difficulty was therefore related to the absence of genre comparison and reformulation activities within existing programmes.

Pragmatic and Intercultural Challenges

Intercultural competence emerged as the highest-difficulty EOP domain across the combined sample. The challenge was especially visible in requests, disagreement, negotiation, feedback, and communication across professional hierarchies. Learners were frequently uncertain about whether their messages were too direct, too indirect, insufficiently assertive, or excessively deferential.

Participants also described difficulty interpreting communication when speakers followed different cultural expectations concerning politeness, turn-taking, punctuality, interpersonal distance, and decision-making. Linguistically correct communication did not always produce the intended professional effect. The results therefore distinguish grammatical proficiency from pragmatic effectiveness.

The high intercultural-difficulty mean of 3.95 demonstrates that conventional EOP programmes may prepare learners for occupational vocabulary and written formats without adequately preparing them for the relational and cultural dimensions of workplace communication.

Absence of Transitional Support

The absence of structured transitional support was identified in 38 responses. Participants reported that academic writing and general English were taught systematically, but the process of adapting these skills to workplace genres was rarely addressed. A representative response stated that learners were not taught how to move from essay writing to business-report production. Respondents specifically requested instruction in professional email writing, report preparation, meeting participation, presentations, interviews, negotiation, pragmatic language, and intercultural communication.

They also favoured workplace simulations and comparisons between academic and professional texts. The integrated findings therefore confirmed the existence of a transitional competence gap. Quantitative results demonstrated distinct EAP and EOP difficulty profiles, while qualitative evidence showed that learners experienced the transition as a reorganisation of genre, register, interpersonal positioning, and communicative identity. Existing programmes appeared to develop academic and occupational skills in isolation but provided insufficient support for transferring competence between the two domains.

Discussion

The findings confirm that the movement from academic to occupational English constitutes a distinct pedagogical transition rather than a simple extension of general language proficiency. EAP and EOP learners displayed different patterns of difficulty, and both groups perceived the shift between the two domains as demanding. The results therefore support the concept of a transitional competence gap, defined as the difficulty learners experience when adapting academic language knowledge to professional purposes, audiences, genres, and relationships.

From Academic Competence to Workplace Performance

EAP learners reported greater difficulty with idiomatic expressions and formal writing conventions, while EOP learners experienced greater difficulty with professional register and intercultural competence. This contrast reflects the different communicative demands of academic and occupational settings.

Academic communication typically requires extended reasoning, source-based argument, citation, disciplinary conventions, and cautious claims (Hyland, 2006). Workplace communication, by contrast, frequently prioritises brevity, clarity, action, and audience adaptation. Learners who have been trained to produce detailed academic explanations may therefore struggle to write concise emails, formulate recommendations, or contribute efficiently to meetings. Their difficulty does not necessarily indicate weak English proficiency. It may instead indicate that their existing competence has not been explicitly reorganised for professional purposes.

This interpretation is consistent with the needs-oriented principles of English for Specific Purposes. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) argue that language programmes should be designed around the communicative demands of target situations. However, the present findings show that identifying target needs is insufficient when learners have not been taught how to connect previous academic learning with new occupational practices. Needs analysis should therefore include not only the language required in the workplace but also the specific transfer difficulties learners experience when moving from one discourse domain to another.

Genre Transfer and Register Flexibility

The qualitative theme of register discontinuity provides the clearest explanation for the transition problem. Learners frequently described academic and professional English as separate systems. This perception suggests that existing instruction often teaches genres individually without making relationships among them visible.

Genre theory treats communicative forms as socially recognised responses to recurring purposes (Swales, 1990). From this perspective, essays, research reports, professional emails, proposals, and workplace briefings are not merely different text formats. They reflect different audiences, institutional goals, and expectations regarding evidence, tone, structure, and authority.

The difficulty reported by participants in transforming academic information into workplace communication shows that genre knowledge was insufficiently transferable. Learners needed support in deciding what information to retain, what to omit, how to reorganise ideas, and how to change tone. Transitional instruction should therefore include paired-genre activities. For example, learners could convert a research summary into an executive briefing, a literature review into a policy note, or an academic presentation into a client-oriented proposal.

Register flexibility is equally important. Professional communication requires movement between formal reports, semi-formal emails, collaborative discussion, persuasive presentation, and hierarchical interaction. EAP instruction may develop formality but not necessarily flexibility. The findings indicate that learners require explicit practice in adjusting language according to audience, status, urgency, and purpose.

Pragmatic Competence as a Core EOP Requirement

Intercultural competence received the highest EOP difficulty score, demonstrating that occupational readiness cannot be measured through grammar and vocabulary alone. Participants reported uncertainty when making requests, disagreeing, negotiating, giving feedback, and communicating with senior colleagues. These tasks require pragmatic competence because their success depends on how meaning is interpreted within social relationships.

Thomas (1983) distinguishes linguistic error from pragmatic failure. A grammatically correct message may still appear impolite, vague, confrontational, or excessively deferential. The present findings illustrate this problem clearly. Learners were often unsure whether professional communication should be direct or indirect and how politeness should be managed within workplace hierarchies.

Intercultural communication further complicates these decisions because expectations vary across professional and cultural settings. Spencer-Oatey (2008) emphasises that communication involves both information exchange and relationship management. EOP programmes that teach only occupational terminology and document

formats may therefore leave learners unprepared for the interpersonal demands of professional interaction. The results support the systematic inclusion of speech acts, politeness strategies, disagreement, negotiation, and feedback within EOP instruction. Learners should be exposed to multiple appropriate forms rather than a single prescribed model, enabling them to make context-sensitive choices.

Cultural Responsiveness without Deficit Framing

The transition difficulty should not be interpreted as evidence that Indian learners' existing communicative practices are inadequate. Norms such as deference, indirectness, and relational sensitivity may be effective in many Indian educational and professional environments. Problems arise when learners encounter settings governed by different expectations but have not been taught how to recognise or negotiate those differences.

A culturally responsive curriculum should therefore expand learners' communicative repertoires rather than replace one set of norms with another. Learners should compare academic, local professional, and international workplace practices and examine how similar intentions can be expressed differently across contexts. Such an approach allows communicative variation to be treated as a resource for analysis rather than as a deficit.

This is particularly important in multilingual India, where workplace interaction may occur across regional, national, and international boundaries. Effective preparation should develop the ability to adapt strategically while maintaining learners' linguistic and cultural identities.

The Need for an Explicit Transitional Stage

The absence of structured transitional support was

reported repeatedly. Existing programmes appeared to provide academic writing or occupational communication separately, but rarely included a clearly defined stage connecting them.

The findings therefore support a three-stage curriculum sequence:

1. development of foundational EAP competence;
2. explicit transitional training in genre transfer, register adaptation, pragmatics, and intercultural communication; and
3. occupation-specific EOP preparation.

The transitional stage is the principal contribution of the study. It recognises that learners do not enter EOP programmes without prior knowledge; they bring academic language competence that can be adapted through guided comparison, reformulation, simulation, and reflection.

Overall, the study extends EAP and EOP research by identifying transition itself as an instructional object. The findings show that academic and occupational English should not be treated as isolated areas. Their relationship must be made visible through a curriculum that teaches learners how to transfer, adapt, and reconstruct communicative competence across contexts.

Proposed Transitional Curriculum Framework Framework Structure

Based on the quantitative challenge profiles and qualitative evidence, this study proposes a three-stage curriculum framework connecting EAP preparation with occupation-specific EOP instruction. The framework does not replace existing academic or professional English programmes. Instead, it introduces an explicit transitional stage through which learners practise adapting previously

Table 2 : Proposed EAP-EOP transitional curriculum framework

Stage	Primary focus	Illustrative learning activities	Expected outcome
Stage 1: EAP foundation	Academic genres, argumentation, evidence and citation	Essays, research summaries, literature reviews and academic presentations	Academic discourse competence
Stage 2: Transitional competence	Genre transfer, register flexibility, pragmatics and intercultural communication	Paired-genre conversion, audience adaptation, professional email writing, speech-act practice and workplace scenarios	Ability to transfer and adapt academic competence
Stage 3: EOP specialisation	Occupation-specific genres and workplace interaction	Reports, proposals, meetings, interviews, negotiations and professional presentations	Context-specific professional communication competence

acquired knowledge to new communicative purposes. The framework is sequential but flexible. Learners may enter at different stages according to their prior experience and assessed needs. The transitional stage is the framework's central element because the findings showed that learners were rarely taught how to move

from academic writing to professional communication. The thesis similarly identifies register discontinuity and the absence of transitional support as major barriers and recommends differentiated pathways combining genre instruction, workplace simulation and intercultural preparation.

Stage 1: Strengthening Transferable EAP Competence

The first stage develops academic competencies that can later be adapted to professional contexts. Instruction should include argument organisation, evidence selection, source synthesis, audience awareness and formal presentation. However, these skills should be taught as adaptable communicative resources rather than fixed conventions.

Learners should examine how academic purpose influences structure, tone and evidence. Comparative analysis of Indian and international academic texts can help make rhetorical expectations explicit without presenting one tradition as inherently superior. This stage provides the knowledge base required for later genre transformation.

Stage 2: Developing Transitional Competence

The second stage explicitly connects academic and workplace English through four curriculum components. First, genre-transfer activities require learners to communicate the same content through different genres. A research abstract may be converted into an executive summary, a literature review into a policy brief, or an academic presentation into a client-focused proposal. These activities make changes in purpose, length, evidence and organisation visible.

Second, register-flexibility tasks develop the ability to adjust tone and formality. Learners may rewrite the same message for a lecturer, colleague, supervisor and external client. Such exercises directly address uncertainty regarding professional email style and hierarchical communication.

Third, pragmatic instruction focuses on requests, disagreement, refusal, negotiation, feedback and clarification. Learners should compare alternative expressions and discuss how directness, politeness and authority affect interpretation. This component responds to the finding that grammatically correct language did not always produce professionally appropriate communication.

Fourth, intercultural reflection and simulation expose learners to differing expectations concerning hierarchy, decision-making, turn-taking and relationship management. Workplace scenarios should represent Indian multilingual settings as well as international professional interaction. The objective is not to teach a single correct cultural model but to develop awareness, adaptability and interpretive judgement.

Stage 3: Occupation-Specific EOP Preparation

The final stage applies transitional competence to particular professional fields. Needs analysis should identify the genres, communicative events and interpersonal demands associated with sectors such as business, healthcare, engineering and education (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; Basturkmen, 2010).

Instruction should use authentic or realistically adapted

workplace materials, including reports, emails, proposals, meeting agendas and presentation briefs. Simulations should require learners to solve problems, communicate decisions and respond to colleagues occupying different organisational roles. Collaboration with employers and professionals can improve the authenticity and continuing relevance of these tasks.

Assessment and Implementation

Assessment should be performance-based and aligned with the three stages. EAP assessment may evaluate argumentation, evidence and academic genre control. Transitional assessment should examine whether learners can reformulate information, adjust register, perform workplace speech acts and explain their communicative choices. EOP assessment should evaluate professional clarity, pragmatic appropriateness, teamwork and occupation-specific genre competence.

Portfolios are particularly suitable because they can document the conversion of academic texts into professional outputs and demonstrate development across stages. Recorded simulations, reflective commentaries and scenario-based tasks can provide further evidence of pragmatic and intercultural competence.

The framework should initially be introduced as a pilot module and evaluated through pre- and post-course performance, learner feedback and employer assessment. Because the framework was developed from mixed-methods evidence rather than tested experimentally, its effectiveness requires future longitudinal validation. Nevertheless, it offers a practical response to the documented transitional competence gap by making the relationship between academic and workplace English an explicit object of teaching.

This study is limited by its cross-sectional design, reliance on self-reported data, and small interview sample. The proposed curriculum framework was derived from mixed-methods evidence but was not experimentally tested. Future research should employ longitudinal designs, direct performance assessments, larger qualitative samples, and classroom-based trials across diverse occupational settings nationwide.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the challenges Indian learners experience when moving from English for Academic Purposes to English for Occupational Purposes. The findings show that the transition is not a straightforward extension of academic proficiency. Instead, learners must adapt their existing knowledge to different communicative purposes, genres, registers, audiences, and professional relationships.

EAP learners reported greater difficulty with idiomatic expressions and formal academic writing, whereas EOP learners experienced greater challenges with professional register and intercultural competence. Both groups perceived the transition as demanding, confirming the existence of a transitional competence gap. Qualitative

evidence further revealed that learners struggled to convert extended academic arguments into concise workplace communication, adjust tone across professional hierarchies, and manage culturally different expectations concerning politeness, directness, and authority.

The study therefore argues that EAP and EOP should not be taught as isolated instructional domains. An explicit transitional stage is required to develop genre transfer, register flexibility, pragmatic competence, and intercultural adaptability. The proposed three-stage framework connects EAP foundations with transitional training and occupation-specific EOP preparation through paired-genre activities, audience adaptation, workplace simulations, speech-act practice, and performance-based assessment.

The principal contribution of the study is the recognition of transition itself as a distinct object of instruction. By making the relationship between academic and workplace English visible, the proposed framework can help learners apply their existing competence more effectively in professional settings. Its implementation should remain culturally responsive, allowing learners to expand their communicative repertoires without positioning Indian linguistic and cultural practices as deficiencies.

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