

Academic Reading for Non-Native English Speakers

ABSTRACT/ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieser Artikel berichtet über die Abschlussarbeit der Autorin für den Erhalt des Baden-Württemberg-Zertifikats für Hochschuldidaktik mit dem Schwerpunkt auf das Leseverständnis von englischen akademischen Texten für nicht-englische Muttersprachler:innen. Das Paper definiert zunächst Englisch für akademische Zwecke (EAP) angesichts der wachsenden Zahl internationaler Studierender und der Internationalisierung deutscher Universitäten, die durch englischsprachige Studiengänge, Veröffentlichungen und Forschungsgruppen angezeigt werden. Anschließend werden die aktuellen EAP- und Lernkompetenzkurse der Universität Heidelberg für Studierende und Doktorand:innen analysiert und die Lücke bei der Unterstützung akademischer Lesefähigkeiten in englischer oder deutscher Sprache ermittelt. Aufgrund der Bedeutung des Lesens englischer akademischer Texte für nicht-englische Muttersprachler:innen in der heutigen Wissenschaft beschreibt das Paper ein einmaliges Unterrichtsexperiment zu diesem Thema. Das Seminar „Lesen englischer akademischer Texte“ schlägt Lernziele und verschiedene Methoden für eine zukünftige Entwicklung akademischer Lesekurse im Rahmen von EAP-Programmen vor. Die studentische Bewertung des Kurses zeigte einen erheblichen Wunsch der Studierenden, sich in diesem Bereich weiterzubilden. Das Projekt unterstreicht ferner die Bedeutung der Lehrer:innenausbildung, die Verbesserung der Feedbackkanäle zwischen Studierenden und Lehrplaner:innen sowie die Integration des akademischen Lesens in Sprach- und Lernkompetenzprogramme.

Schlagerworte: EAP – Lernen – Leseverständnis – Nicht-Muttersprachler:innen – Universität Heidelberg

This paper reports on the author's final assignment to obtain the Baden-Württemberg Certificate for Teaching and Learning at University Level that focused on reading English academic texts for non-native English speakers. The paper firstly defines English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in light of the growing number of international students and the internationalisation of German universities indicated by English-language degree courses, publications, and research groups. It then analyses the current EAP and study skills courses offered by the University of Heidelberg to undergraduate and postgraduate students and identifies the gap in supporting academic reading skills, either in English or German language. Due to the importance of reading English academic texts for non-native English speakers in today's academia, the paper describes a one-off teaching experiment on the subject. The seminar "reading English academic texts" suggests learning objectives and different methods for possible future development of academic reading courses as part of EAP programs. The students' evaluation of the course demonstrated a significant desire by students to receive further training in this area. The project further highlights the importance of teacher training, improvement of feedback channels between

students and curriculum designers, and integration of academic reading into language and study skills programs.

Keywords: EAP – study skills – reading comprehension – non-native English speakers – Heidelberg University

Introduction

During my MSc degree program in Gender Research at the London School of Economics and Political Sciences (LSE) in 2010, I attended a series of academic skills' courses for international students. Despite high grades in the Academic International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exam and years of experience as a UN employee and international journalist, I experienced difficulties reading and understanding academic texts. Since my undergraduate studies were in Iran, the challenge was partly caused by encountering an entirely new academic culture and lacking the necessary study skills to navigate through it. Although the differences between the academic cultures of German and Anglo-American universities are not as stark, I noticed similar difficulties (among others) that my German-speaking students experience while reading English-language academic texts.

This paper reports on my final assignment to obtain the Baden-Württemberg Certificate for Teaching and Learning at University Level that focused on reading English academic texts for non-native English speakers. The paper firstly defines English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in light of the growing number of international students and the internationalisation of German universities indicated by English-language degree courses, publications, and research groups. It further analyses the current EAP and study skills courses offered by the University of Heidelberg to undergraduate and postgraduate students and identifies the gap in supporting academic reading skills, either in English or German language. Due to the importance of reading English academic texts for non-native English speakers in today's academia, the paper describes a one-off teaching experiment on the subject. The seminar "Reading English Academic Texts" suggests learning objectives and different methods for possible future development of academic reading courses as part of EAP programs. The final reflections demonstrate a significant desire by students to receive further training in this area. The project also highlights the importance of integrating academic reading as part of language and study skills programs for students and encourages university-wide curricular incorporation of such training.

EAP and Internationalisation of Universities

The increasing number of international students in British universities – up from approximately 216,000 in 2000/01 to 458,000 in 2017/18 (Study in UK 2020) – as well as the internationalisation of labour and education and the economic benefits of fees for international students¹ encourage customer-based services that could “help international students have positive experiences, fulfil their educational goals, and return home as satisfied customers” (ANDRADE 2006: 133). This customer-service mentality grew parallel to the widespread integration of study skills programs in British Universities after implementing the Further and Higher Education Act in 1992 (WINGATE 2006: 457). Similar Academic Language and Learning support for students began at Australian Universities in the mid-1980s and included “one-to-one student consultations and workshops” carried out by professional tutors or “advisors”. (EVANS, HENDERSON & ASHTON-HAY 2019: 1). Some American universities offer an integrated, built-in approach such as Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and Writing in the Disciplines (WiD) (HILL, TINKER & CATTERALL: 2010).

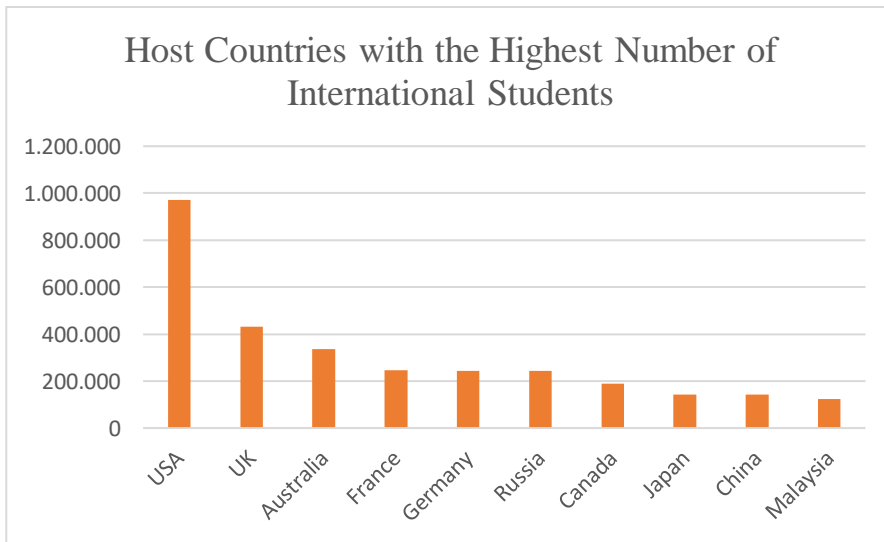


Figure 1.

Host countries with the highest number of international students in 2016
(DAAD & DZHW 2019: 23)

¹ See for example the research briefing on “International and EU students in higher education in the UK FAQs” at the House of Common’s Library, published in 2021, (<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-7976/>; Accessed 22.05.2021)

Germany ranks as the 5th country worldwide with the highest number of international students after the USA, UK, and Australia, sharing a close score with France, in the 4th, and Russia, in the 6th rank (figure 1). The number of international students in Germany is steadily growing primarily due to the increasing number of international students with previous studies outside Germany (figure 2). 30% of this category of students come from Asia and the Pacific region, 19% from Western Europe, and 16% from North Africa and the Middle East, with the latest group showing solid growth (+34%) (DAAD & DZHW 2019: 53).

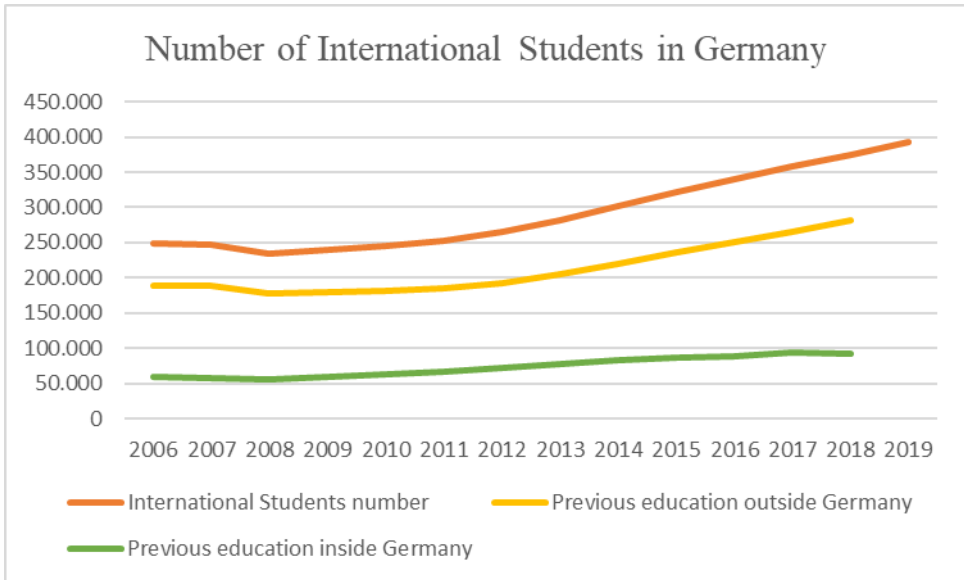


Figure 2.

Number of international students in Germany (DAAD & DZHW 2019: 50)

The above-mentioned growing global demand for English as the academic lingua franca also affected English learning and teaching programs. English for Academic Purposes (EAP) has developed gradually as a branch of English Language Teaching (ELT) since the 1970s and became an established subcategory of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (SMITH 2020). EAP “focuses on the types of English learners encounter and use in academic or study situations, usually in higher education contexts, and on the teaching and learning of academic English” (BASTURKMEN 2015: 3). EAP could be divided into two areas (UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE n.d.):

- 1) *Language skills such as listening comprehension, fluency development, oral intelligibility, reading, grammar, writing, and vocabulary development.*

- II) *Academic study skills such as test taking and note taking skills, academic vocabulary usage, critical reading and writing, comprehending academic lectures, research and library skills, formal composition forms and development, including research papers.*

Although EAP generally puts more emphasis on study skills, in particular on “learner autonomy and critical thinking” (SMITH 2020), the importance of integrating language skills into EAP has been highlighted by practitioners in the field (CAPLAN 2016). The lack of necessary language competencies negatively affects students’ participation in class discussions in multiple ways. In this paper’s example, poor reading comprehension affects the argumentation ability to conduct class discussions or fulfil writing tasks. Consequently, students might avoid discussions, spend an unreasonable amount of time reading, or translate English texts. All these ‘solutions’ slow down the learning process, induce a stressful learning environment, and act as obstacles in achieving learning objectives.

In order to evaluate the EAP programs provided by Heidelberg University, students could be generally grouped based on their language skills, as described in Table 1. Apart from the BA in American Studies, Heidelberg University does not offer any other bachelor program entirely taught in English (STUDY IN GERMANY 2020a). University admission necessitates a German language certificate, and most of the university services are designed and communicated for people fluent in the German language. Consequently, I have not included EAP programs for undergraduate students in this paper. However, some courses at the Bachelor level are taught in English or a combination of English and German. A simple search in the LSF portal of Heidelberg University showed 23 courses in the English language for Bachelor students in various disciplines in the winter semester 2020/21. As this paper proceeds to demonstrate, such gaps between the skills required for offered courses and the skill set students actually possess continue to appear even at the postgraduate level.

Level of studies	language
Undergraduate students (BA)	Native German speaker
	Non-native German speaker
Postgraduate students (MA & PhD)	Native German speaker
	Non-native German speaker
	Non-native English speaker

Table 1.

Categorisation of students based on their language proficiencies

Contrary to Bachelor study programs, there are 19 Master degree programs fully taught in the English language at Heidelberg University in a range of different disciplines (STUDY IN GERMANY 2020b). In winter semester 2019/20, there were 5.336 international

students at Heidelberg University: 1361 Bachelor students (25.5%), 1345 Master students (25.2%), and 1071 PhD students (21%)² (UNIVERSITÄTSVERWALTUNG 2019). Without considering other postgraduate certificates such as Magister, the postgraduate degrees form almost 50% of all international students. In 2019, international doctoral graduations made up 28.4% of total doctoral graduations at Heidelberg University (HEIDELBERG UNIVERSITY: 2020). Unfortunately, there is no statistic on the languages spoken by the international students. However, as Heidelberg University increases its international profile, publications in English, research exchange programs, and partnerships with universities abroad, English language proficiency gains a more substantial weight.

It should be noted here that Heidelberg University offers extensive courses on the German language, including a standard exam for a German language certificate (DSH). The International Students' Centre (Internationales Studienzentrum)³ offers German language courses for exchange students, PhD students, and guest scientists, and structured courses and exams for obtaining the necessary certificate for students starting degrees taught in German. Additionally, the University offers PhD students language consultancy (Sprachberatung) in German and English, which functions rather as a proof-reading service. Such services could be helpful for students at the writing/publication stage since they can receive feedback for writing samples of less than 3000 words. However, the service is limited to "linguistic issues only, i.e. grammar, spelling, punctuation, and conventions of the respective language" and does not cover further aspects such as "content, structure, or style" (GRADUATE ACADEMY 2020).

Based on an online exploration of different programs available at University of Heidelberg's web pages, Table 2 summarises the academic study skills programs for German-speaking undergraduate students. As mentioned earlier, the prevailing assumption in designing such programs has been a high level of German language proficiency. Interestingly, there are no programs offered for non-native German speakers to develop their language skills for academic purposes. Similarly, there are no programs covering EAP at the undergraduate level. The programs "Stark im Studium" and "Fit im Studium" are both offered by the University centrally regardless of disciplinary background. Both focus on controlling stress, time management, self-confidence, career decisions, motivation, funding and scholarship, and similar. This paper refers to social skills, communication, intrapersonal skills of self-control and positive self-concept as *Soft Skills* (LIPPMANN et al. 2015). This set of skills are not necessarily academic but can affect academic performance and are highly transferable to future careers. For example, the seminar on presentation skills highlights effective communication and confidence rather than the fundamental concepts of academic presentation. Some of the programs offered by the Key

² The discrepancy in percentages is a result of other forms of graduate certificates such as Master of Education, Magister, etc.

³ <https://isz.uni-heidelberg.de/>; Accessed 18.10.2021)

Competencies Unit (Abteilung Schlüsselkompetenzen und Hochschuldidaktik)⁴ cover more study skills and are designed in a user-friendly way, including offline educational videos. However, the unit sometimes offers just a PDF document with a couple of recommendations inside, which would hardly attract the younger undergraduate students.⁵ None of the programs engages with academic reading and comprehension (English or German). The offered extracurricular programs assume that study skills are transferable and would function similarly in English-language courses at the undergraduate level. However, introducing students to different conventions of writing, debating, and argumentation will help them tremendously in navigating through different academic cultures.

	Student Support Services				
Provided by	Uni Library	General Uni Administration		Core Competencies' Unit	
	Uni Library	Fit im Studium	Stark im Studium	NutzBar: Lernen	Study Skills
Academic Study Skills (in German)					
test taking and note taking skills	-	+	+	-	-
academic writing	-	+	+	+	+4
critical reading	-	-	-	-	- ⁶
comprehending academic lectures	-	-	-	+	+
research and library skills	+	-	-	-	-
Soft skills	-	+	+	+	+

Table 1.

Academic study skills programs for German-speaking undergraduate students

⁴ Please note that the evaluation of University services was carried out in 2020. The “heiSKILLS Center, Teaching and Learning unit” (heiSKILLS Kompetenz- und Sprachenzentrum) has replaced the Key Competencies' Unit at the time of publishing this paper. Many courses have been revised and scientific writing courses contain reading strategies. Despite these changes, there is still not enough support for reading skills.

⁵ It must be noted that at the time of publishing this paper, the course “Scientific Writing” (in German and English, freely available online) does include a chapter on Reading Strategies (see here: <https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/slk/ScientificWriting.html>; Accessed 18.10.2021). This chapter is still a single short video, but the positive changes are surely helpful for students.

⁶ A new course on critical thinking has since also been developed (but only in German): <https://www.uni-heidelberg.de/slk/Studyskills.html>; Accessed 18.10.2021)

Table 3 demonstrates the study skills programs provided for German-speaking postgraduate students (native and non-native). It must be noted here that the university library offers occasional courses on writing or other academic study skills. Throughout the author’s PhD studies at the University of Heidelberg (2016-2020), these courses were frequently booked up and were met with enthusiasm. Despite their success, the library does not offer a regular program for study skills. The Graduate Academy is the sole provider of support programs for PhD students. International master degree students attending English-language master degrees are entirely neglected and fall under the supportive umbrella of none of these university units. Table 4 shows academic skills programs for non-native English speakers; these could be either German or international students. Although the systematic changes and the positive growth of the Graduate Academy in recent years have enriched the diversity of programs offered to non-native English-speaking students, it still does not provide separate courses in the essential area of reading comprehension and reading strategies.

Academic Skills (German language)	Uni Library	Graduate Academy
test taking and note taking skills	-	+
academic writing	-	+
critical reading	-	-
comprehending academic lectures	-	+
research and library skills	+	-
Soft skills	-	-

Table 2.

Academic skills programs for German-speaking postgraduate students (native and non-native)

Academic Skills (English language)	Uni Library	Graduate Academy
test taking and note taking skills	-	+
academic writing	-	+
critical reading	-	-
comprehending academic lectures	-	+
research and library skills	+	-
Soft skills	-	+

Table 3.

Academic skills programs for non-native English-speaking postgraduate students

Academic Reading for Non-Native English Speakers

The analysis of study skills' programs at the University of Heidelberg highlights the lack of academic reading courses in general. Expressly, it underlines the shortfall of academic reading as part of EAP for non-native English speakers at the postgraduate level. Such an educational gap challenges academic objectives in an increasingly international environment, where often the language of reading material, courses, publications, etc., is English. I encountered this problem in 2018 as I co-taught a seminar in English on Critical Perspectives on Geographical Knowledge Production to advanced under- and post-graduate students. The text- and discussion-based seminar proved to be a challenge for students since they reported difficulties reading and comprehending texts, identifying the central argument, and summarising it. This teaching experience right before my classes for the Baden-Württemberg Certificate for Teaching and Learning at University Level resulted in a teaching experiment focusing on academic reading for non-native English speakers. The one-off seminar was not only designed to address the educational gap described above, but it also aimed to integrate such practices into routine teaching material.

Planning a one-off seminar outside the usual curriculum and at the beginning of the winter semester, when all new students start their studies, became only possible with the active support of the geography students' council (Fachschaft). The students' representatives reaffirmed the existing problem and showed their support by advertising the seminar in their monthly newsletter. Additionally, two professors and heads of working groups of urban geography and economic geography mentioned the seminar and the idea behind it in their research groups and lectures and asked their students to participate. Of the twelve students registered for the seminar, nine students were from the geography institute, mainly

enrolled in the economic geography Master's degree. The other three were from North American Studies at the Heidelberg Center for American Studies and had mixed levels. I prepared content suitable for advanced undergraduate (BA) and postgraduate (MA) students from the social sciences and humanities, regardless of their specific major. I also asked participants to bring a reading text to the class that they found difficult to read and understand.

The lack of formal inclusion in the curriculum, the absence of final exams, and corresponding curricular points made didactic methods such as constructive alignment partially implementable. Since the principle of constructive alignment starts “with the outcomes we intend students to learn, and align[s] teaching and assessment to those outcomes” (BIGGS 2020), I focused mostly on the sandwich method that divides the teaching course into three phases of the beginning, main working phase, and conclusion (IVANIŠ et al. 2009). The sandwich method also provides a combination of collective and individual learning that increases the possibility of meeting students' needs in different formats and allows them to work with their understanding individually and in groups.

Consequently, the beginning phase allows the students to introduce themselves, learn about learning outcomes, express their expectations and problems, collectively decide about a teaching agreement, and familiarise themselves with the teaching content. The main working phase focuses more on the themes, content, and learning objectives. This phase is the time that the layering of teaching-learning activities takes place. The concluding phase is about evaluating the content, methods, and learning outcomes. The expectations mentioned at the beginning are re-evaluated, and each student can also reflect individually if they have met their personal learning objectives. This section of the class is also an opportunity for the teacher to assess the communication of learning content and if the students were content with the teaching methods and the classroom atmosphere.

Based on the sandwich method, I designed the learning objectives, course content and methods as reflected in Table 5. The teaching material was designed based on four resources:

- My personal experience as a student with similar difficulties in reading texts and the comprehensive training I had received at the London School of Economics and Political Sciences
- Some material that we had received during our teacher training courses in Heidelberg in the course “Das Tieflernen fördern” [supporting deep learning] by Martin Mürmann

- Teaching and learning websites of some leading universities, especially Academic Skills Centre at the University of Melbourne⁷ and the Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning at Harvard University⁸
- The popular YouTube channel of an American college student called College Info Geek⁹ that provides students with educational tips. His channel was an inspiring source of ideas since thousands of students worldwide comment about their problems under his videos. These diverse comments and perspectives about learning were very informative¹⁰.

Considering the limited time of the session, I decided to focus on core reading methods and an introduction to different publication formats such as books, papers, readers, etc. and how to find essential information in each of these formats. Table 5 on the following pages will demonstrate these considerations in more detail.

⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCaJD4vYNav5Zub15IyplZ0g>; Accessed 18.10.2021)

⁸ <https://bokcenter.harvard.edu/home>; Accessed 18.10.2021)

⁹ <https://collegeinfo geek.com/>; Accessed 18.10.2021)

¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/user/electrickeye91/videos>; Accessed 18.10.2021)

Time	Objective	Content	Method / Social form	Material / Documents
16:15-16:30	<p>— Get to know the participants and evaluate their expectations.</p> <p>— To make a learning agreement (e.g. language of the session).</p>	<p>Beginning phase:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Greetings — Expectations — Wishes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Participants stick name tags on their chests. — Everyone in the group answers the questions on the flipchart: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Your name, your native language — Your major? BA? MA? — Why are you here? — What are you expecting to learn? — The lecturer notes the wishes and expectations and pins them on the board. These will be used later to evaluate the session. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Name tags — Cards in different colours
16:30-16:50	<p>Participants can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — outline the three key reading techniques that were introduced in the course — identify the most suitable technique for their text and explain the reason for their choice 	<p>Working Phase:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — The teacher introduces reading techniques, scanning, skimming, active/critical reading — The teaching will be followed by an open discussion about the texts, which students found difficult to read 	<p>After the teaching content, the students (the number depends on the time) can discuss their personal problems with reading a text they have brought along. The lecturer facilitates the discussion by referring to the introduced reading techniques.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Texts that students have brought along and have difficulty reading and understanding them — Flip chart presentation of the teaching material

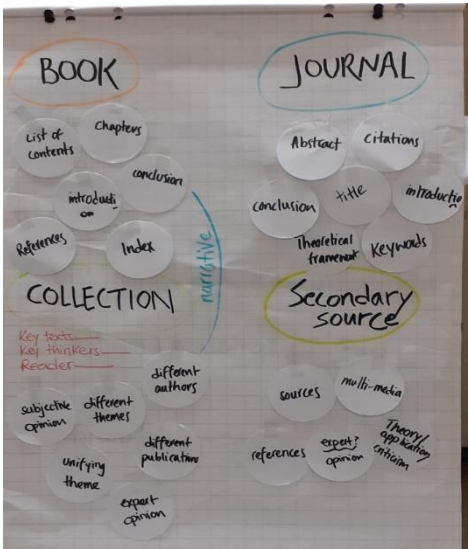
Time	Objective	Content	Method / Social form	Material / Documents
16:50-17:10	<p>Participants identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — the different formats of academic texts — the different blocks of information in each format — by working in pairs on the academic material provided by the teacher (books, journals, readers and secondary information sources) 	<p>Working Phase: Identification of different blocks of information in different scientific publications through pair work and comments from the lecturer. The activity helps students to find the information they are looking for faster and more efficiently. It also enables students to search for information that suits the intended purpose.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — students form groups of three, and each group receives one of the following publication formats: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — book — paper from academic journals — reader — secondary information sources (printed Wikipedia pages, Oxford dictionary of critical theory, screenshots of YouTube videos). — They discuss the structure and various blocks of information in each format. Then they report back to the bigger group. — The teacher actively comments throughout the reporting. She communicates the teaching content through her interaction and engagement with the students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — book — paper from academic journals — reader — secondary information sources (printed Wikipedia pages, Oxford dictionary of critical theory, screenshots of YouTube videos).

Table 4.
 Planning the seminar on academic reading

Time	Objective	Content	Method / Social form	Material / Documents
17:10-17:20	<p>— Participants can review the effectiveness of the techniques and information they have received during the course with an additional round of reading tips.</p>	<p>Working Phase:</p> <p>— Teaching content on reading tips from the teacher</p>	<p>— The reading tips will be presented from a flip chart containing a summarised list of the tips.</p>	<p>— Flipchart presentation</p>
17:20-17:30	<p>— Assessment of whether the students' expectations were met</p> <p>— Feedback on the content, usefulness, atmosphere and willingness of students to take part in academic skills' courses</p>	<p>Finishing phase:</p> <p>— Review of the expectations expressed at the beginning of the course: achieved? What was missing? What was unexpectedly positive?</p> <p>— Short feedback through visualisation (target method)</p>	<p>— Review of expectations through a group discussion</p> <p>Feedback through visualisation (target method)</p>	<p>- Flipchart</p> <p>— Feedback-Target with colourful stickers</p>

Table 5. Planning the seminar on academic reading

The seminar started with an introduction and participants' expectation round. Going through expectations, I explained if the seminar would address the expected issue. For example, three people asked for tips on speed-reading, which was not part of the defined learning objectives. The working phase started with input on the three main reading techniques: scanning, skimming, and active reading. Other than one person, students were not familiar with these basic methods of reading. The input was a classical frontal presentation of the content. After the presentation, I asked the group if they can use the methods they have learned to address their problems with the text they had brought with them. As expected, many problems were located in the area of reading strategies rather than language skills.



For the second phase, students were divided into four groups and were given one of the below materials. They had to discuss what they had received, the main building blocks of the text, and what kind of information each of these blocks held.

1. three books
2. one reader plus a book on key thinkers of space and place
3. Journal articles plus a special issue
4. Printouts from Oxford Social Theory dictionary, Wikipedia, YouTube, and other secondary sources

Figure 3.
The results of group work on textual formats

After the designated time for group work, we discussed each group's material collectively (figure 3). The following discussion provoked mixed reactions. It seemed that some of the participants found the activity useful and were taking notes. In contrast, others looked sceptical about whether knowing the structure of different publications would help them with their reading comprehension.

We finished the seminar with a collective revision of the students' expectations at the beginning of the class. The students performed quick individual feedback through a target visualisation on their way out (figure 4).

The overall feedback showed that the course successfully achieved a learning-friendly atmosphere in such a short amount of time. It also reflected a significant willingness to take part in other academic skills' courses. Students also were, on average satisfied with the content and usefulness of the course. The evaluation affirms that structural integration of EAP courses in extra- or curricular programs is strongly demanded by students, who currently receive little support in fulfilling their reading tasks.

Final Reflections

This paper highlights the importance of supporting non-native English-speaking students in reading English texts – even for courses taught in a language other than English. Analysing courses and seminars offered for academic study skills at Heidelberg University highlights the lack of EAP-

oriented services particularly in reading comprehension. An experimental seminar has been designed to address this gap at Heidelberg University as one of the leading universities in Germany with a large number of international students. The two primary outcomes of this educational experiment indicate: firstly, the eagerness of students in developing their EAP and study skills further as they are routinely exposed to the English language as the academic lingua franca, and secondly, that the integration of EAP in study skills' programs cover some of the neglected but essential areas for the educational progress of – especially postgraduate – students. The seminar on “Reading Academic English Texts” was the final assignment to obtain the Baden-Württemberg Certificate for Teaching and Learning at University Level. The line of thought that led to this experiment underlines the role didactic training plays in the identification of educational problems by practitioners themselves. Such didactic training also facilitates finding local, practical, and informed solutions through co-operation between teaching staff, students, and student support services.

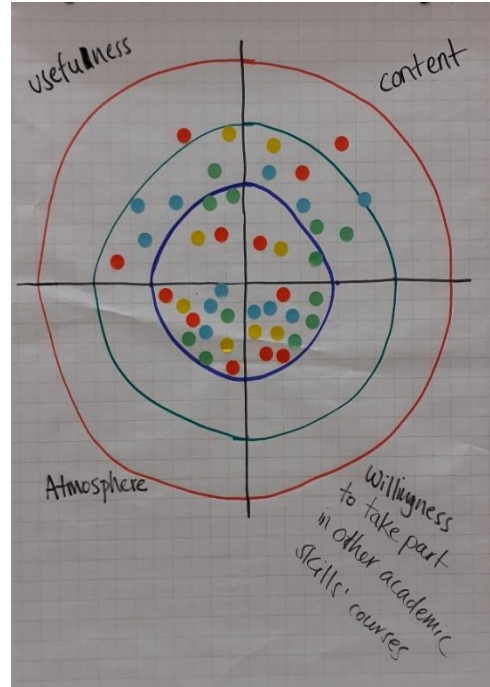


Figure 4.
Students' evaluation of the course

The experience of organising a seminar independent from the overall learning objectives of the educational institute also highlights the importance of official encouragement or university-approved frameworks for such courses. Whilst scientific studies have rejected the motivational significance of grades (CHAMBERLIN, YASUÉ & CHIANG 2018), innovative solutions can combine traditional grading systems with extracurricular services. For example, the career services at the University of Münster encourages students to collect points by attending short seminars. Students who collect 16 points and write a final reflection can receive two credit points.¹¹ Another source of motivation could be the tangible impacts of attending EAP and study skills' courses on students' educational performance. The creative interactive and problem-based design of such courses could help attract more students.

The issue of study skills offered as extracurricular activities has already been extensively debated. Wingate criticises the “bolt-on” approach to study skills and argues that it “contradicts experiential learning theories which emphasize that effective learning takes place when learners experience a problem and take action, reflect on the action, form concepts on the basis of their reflection and apply these concepts in new situations from subject content and knowledge” (WINGATE 2006: 458). Instead, she offers a “built-in” approach, in which skills are integrated into the study program and learning objectives, and are assessed (WINGATE 2006: 459). Although the integration of study skills in the curriculum seems ideal, other researchers have identified five key challenges in implementing them, including geographical and structural location, staffing, co-operation and liaison, resourcing, and strategic factors (BLYTHMAN et al. 2003: 203). These barriers are recognisable in the institutional multiplicity of the units responsible for study skills, the general lack of EAP programs at Heidelberg University, and the logistic difficulties of teacher training and curricular change. However, some issues, such as naming the services, co-operation, and resourcing, could be achievable in mid-term planning.

Considering the barriers to integrating study skills in the university curriculum, the experimental project in this paper provides a good example of how such structural changes become more achievable with relevant teacher training programs. The Baden-Württemberg Certificate for Teaching and Learning at University Level is just a voluntary program for many disciplines. The teaching tradition in German universities puts much of the teaching load on PhD students without prior experience or didactic knowledge, which complicates structural reforms due to the high overturn of PhD students and the burden of constant didactic training for them. Consequently, teaching experience, teacher training, and integration of EAP in the curriculum should be designed as elements of holistic educational planning. Finally, if there is a will to work collectively towards an inclusive support system for all students with different language competencies, communication between teachers, students, trainers, and university's decision-makers should be improved. This paper, therefore, hopes to contribute to the improvement of the University's services to achieve a more inclusive and supportive environment for all students at different stages of learning.

¹¹ <https://www.uni-muenster.de/CareerService/programm/stempel.html>; Accessed 18.10.2021)

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