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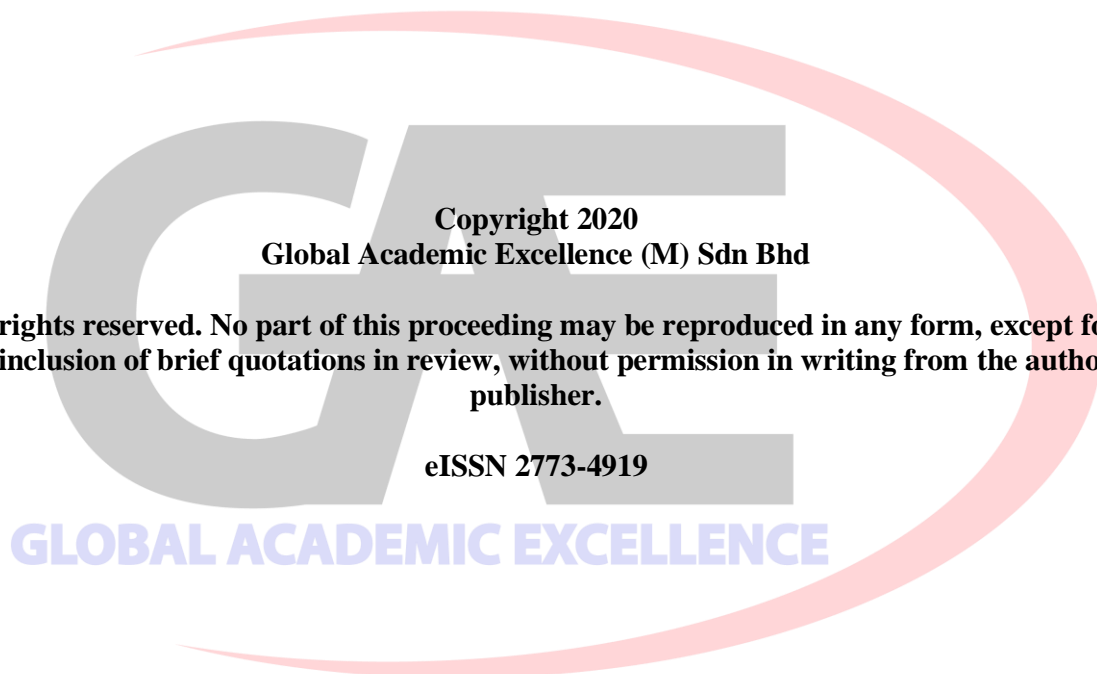## eISSN: 2773-4919

Contents

EGAP VS ESAP? EXPLORING THE EAP INSTRUCTORS' PERCEPTIONS

Shahrul Nizam Mohd Basari

Kulliyah of Languages and Management, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), Malaysia, (E-mail: shahnzmb@iium.edu.my)

Abstract: *According to Hyland (2006), one key issue in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is related to the notion of specificity, which has been discussed in two approaches in EAP: 'English for General Academic Purposes' (EGAP) and 'English for Specific Academic Purposes' (ESAP). The knowledge of these two approaches is deemed important for EAP instructors, as it has been discussed by many EAP practitioners in the context of EAP course design and best approaches (e.g., Basturkmen, 2003 & 2006; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Jordan, 1997; Hyland, 2006; Spack, 1988; Widdowson, 1983). This study investigated EAP instructors' perceptions of EGAP and ESAP approaches for an EAP writing course at a language centre. Using purposive sampling, 15 EAP instructors were interviewed. The interview data were analysed qualitatively using the thematic analysis. Initial responses from all instructors revealed that none of them knew about the two approaches at all. Their understanding of the differences between EGAP and ESAP is important to understand the kind of approach they believed was used in the academic writing course. More than half of the instructors perceived the EAP writing course as using EGAP as its approach, with some believed that the course should remain with this approach and some thought that the course should adopt the ESAP approach. The findings revealed that academic writing at the language centre has used the mainstream approach in EAP – the EGAP approach. In spite of its advantages, it is proposed that the EAP writing course should take initiatives to incorporate at least some concepts from other models or approaches, which are deemed appropriate to improve the pedagogical approaches in the course.*

Keywords: *English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP), English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP), English for Specific Purposes (ESP)*

Introduction

An English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course design requires a complex process (Tajino, James & Kijima, 2005). One of the most important things to consider when designing an EAP course is, it has to be a course that serves the needs of the students and also addresses the socio-political aspects beyond the communicative contexts (Hyland, 2006). Since students' academic contexts may differ greatly, it is imperative that constant research is done involving different academic disciplines to really understand the differences, and also see whether the differences are significant for the stakeholders. According to Hyland (2006), one key issue in EAP is related to the notion of specificity, which has been discussed in the context of 'English for General Academic Purposes' (EGAP) and 'English for Specific Academic Purposes' (ESAP). The notion of EGAP and ESAP has been much debated in EAP and has been addressed by many in discussing the best approach for EAP (e.g., Basturkmen, 2003, 2006; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Hyland, 2006; Jordan, 1997; Spack, 1988; Widdowson, 1983).

In terms of practicality, the EGAP model appears to accommodate course designers in managing the stakeholders and preparing the course materials, thus making it a more common approach in most EAP courses. However, although the ESAP model requires more work in

designing the course, it is believed to be a better step towards providing students with the right form of English for their academic purposes, that the students will be able to benefit when learning in their disciplines.

The present study looks at an EAP course at a language centre in a public university in Malaysia. The course focuses on the writing skills for academic purposes. It is offered by the university's language centre for students as one of the university required courses. Students usually take it in the final year of their undergraduate studies, since they have the priority to do courses offered by their respective faculties (fundamental and core courses) first. With regard to the course, the instructors teaching it are writing instructors from the language centre, with no specialisations in the disciplines where the students are from. EAP is taught to students from different faculties, where they may be in the same class, learn the same content, do the same tasks and produce the same product, which is a research paper. One of the course learning objectives is to produce students who can use the language for research writing. This can be compared to the notion that the course does not cater to one specific discipline, but builds around a general approach associated with a common core of universal skills which can cater to various disciplines (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002). In other words, the course employs a one-size-fits-all approach in teaching academic writing to all faculties. Therefore, the EAP course at this language centre can be closely associated with EGAP.

Despite the description of the course that fits the definition of an EGAP-based course, there is a question of the instructors' perceptions of this approach. Even if they are aware of the EGAP approach in the course, what would their attitude be towards an ESAP-based EAP course? This study was conducted to investigate the instructors' perceptions of the EAP course that they are teaching at the language centre. The research question is: What are the EAP instructors' perceptions of the EAP course in the context of EGAP and ESAP?

Literature Review

According to Dudley-Evans and St John (1998), EGAP refers to "the teaching of the skills and language that are common to all disciplines" (p. 41). It is based on an idea that EAP should not be seen as a course to fulfill specific purposes (Widdowson, 1983), but that EAP is an approach to language teaching in which the learning process should not differ from general English (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Jordan (1997), while discussing EGAP in the context of integrated study skills, he states that by having EGAP, students are able to see the relationship between skills and can utilise them in their studies and projects. However, he also points out the disadvantages of it, that tutors will have limited choice and control of materials and methods, and that students may not need all the skills. He describes EGAP by giving six main study skills areas deemed important in an EGAP approach. The study skills areas are: academic reading and writing; vocabulary development; lectures and note taking; speaking for academic purposes; reference or research skills; and examination skills. Overall, the main idea behind an EGAP approach is that EAP courses should not be designed to cater to one specific discipline, but should be built around a general approach that is concerned with a common core of universal skills or language forms which can cater to various disciplines in an institution (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002).

On the other hand, ESAP is a view that is concerned more with the needs of a particular group in the academic context; in other words, ESAP implements disciplinary specificity in an EAP course (Hyland, 2013b). To understand disciplinary specificity in EAP, it is important to understand the concept of an academic discipline, which is not straightforward (Becher & Trowler, 2001). Becher and Trowler (2001), in their attempt to define academic discipline, explain how statistics is known as a discipline after originally being in the discipline of

mathematics. This situation can happen when academic institutions recognise the formation of the discipline in terms of their organisational structures alongside the emergence of an international community, consisting of professional associations and specialist journals. In summary, disciplines are "in part identified by the existence of relevant departments; but it does not follow that every department represents a discipline" (Becher & Trowler, 2001, p. 41). However, the term 'disciplinary specificity' conveys a different meaning, as it adds the notion of specialism. According to Becher and Trowler, "Specialisms, by contrast, are less formally recognizable in terms of organized professional groupings, dedicated journals and bibliographical categories" (p. 67). They explain that the characters of disciplines are multi-dimensional, that the objects of study vary and may change over time (e.g., anthropology), and may be more or less contentious (e.g, the disagreement whether the object of study in English literature is the body of literature or pertinent sociological issues associated with the literature). Other dimensions include disciplinary stance (concerned with whether a discipline is focusing on 'knowing' or 'doing), disciplinary mode (normal or reflexive), classification (the extent of 'boundedness' from other disciplinary areas) and frame (the extent of agreement and control over content among specialists). These dimensions create recognitions of specialisms, and even sub-specialisms, in a discipline.

With regard to disciplinary specificity in EAP, it refers to "the teaching of the features that distinguish one discipline from others" (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998, p.41). As an example, EAP courses that distinguish the course by disciplines such as English for Law or English for Medicine are considered ESAP. Hyland (2002) asserts that EAP must involve teaching literacy skills suitable to the purposes and understandings of a particular academic community. In this view, it is important to note that students' disciplinary activities are an essential part of their engagement in their disciplines. One of his main arguments against EGAP concerns the notion of the common core hypothesis – transferable general skills and forms across contexts and purposes. Hyland claims that the main problem lies in defining what a common core is. Although some topics like 'business writing' and 'persuasive language' as well as features of academic writing like 'explicitness' can be categorised as a common core, he argues that they are "only 'core' in a very general sense and give the misleading impression of uniform disciplinary practices" (p. 389). He further explains that these core features are insufficient for students to understand disciplinary conventions or develop academic writing skills.

A case study by James (2010) supports the arguments made by Hyland. He examines learning transfer from EGAP writing instruction to other academic courses. As the course is EGAP, discipline specificity was the central issue. Therefore, James examines the effectiveness of the EGAP course by investigating the extent to which EGAP writing instruction helped learning transfer to students' work in their academic programs. The students in the course were interviewed and asked for writing samples produced in the writing course and other courses. The findings showed that a wide range of learning outcomes (e.g., 'describing visually', 'narrating', 'using similes/metaphors', and 'using past perfect tense accurately') did transfer from the writing course across task types and disciplines, although some were more frequent (e.g., 'avoiding fused sentences'; 'framing') than others (e.g., 'using past perfect accurately'; 'using similes/metaphors'). On the other hand, even though the results suggest that EGAP writing instruction could lead to transfer, James argues that it was inappropriate to draw a conclusion about the relative efficacy of EGAP versus ESAP writing instruction. His argument shows that skills transfer does not necessarily indicate the success of EGAP instructions in providing the students with disciplinary conventions.

Basturkmen (2003) extends the use of the terms 'wide-angle' and 'narrow-angle' by Widdowson to reflect her notion of EGAP and ESAP respectively in her paper discussing the advantages and disadvantages of both types of course designs in English for Specific Purposes (ESP). According to Widdowson (1983), wide angle courses are similar to English for general purposes courses that provide learners with "a general capacity to enable them to cope with undefined eventualities in the future" (p. 6), while narrow angle courses provide learners with "a restricted competence to enable them to cope with clearly defined tasks" (p. 6). Basturkmen argues that although narrow-angled course designs can be theoretically attractive, they are impractical in terms of preparation time and can cause students to have insufficient experience of language if they end up not being in the group for which the courses are intended. Furthermore, Basturkmen (2006) questions the existence of 'specific elements' in ESP. She introduces the idea of 'specifiable elements' which are more critical for ESP learners but are not exclusive to certain disciplines. Moreover, some other issues raised by Jordan (1997) with regard to ESAP are students' inadequacy in the specialist subject and tutors' teaching ineffectiveness in the specialist subject. He explains that some students may have difficulties coping with the subjects in the disciplines even before coping with the language of the subjects. The EAP tutors may also not be able to cope with the technicality of the specialist subjects and this in turn may affect their teaching. In addition, Spack (1988) even refutes a claim that teaching a course focusing on writing in a particular discipline is possible if the teachers learn how a discipline creates and transmits knowledge. She argues that it would take a great level of commitment on the teachers' part and it "involves even more specialized knowledge and skills than does the teaching of the subject matter itself" (p. 99).

Nevertheless, Hyland (2013a & 2013b), although admitting that the notion of specificity remains controversial and may be logistically challenging and not cost effective, claims that EAP is not about improving generic language ability, but helping students to develop communicative skills in specific academic and professional settings. Hyland and Hamp-Lyons (2002) argue that various research shows that different communities have different purposes and "successful communication depends on the projection of a shared context" (p. 5). This notion is further supported by the findings of some studies on ESP/EAP. For example, Zhu (2004) in her study investigating the business and engineering faculties' role in academic writing instruction, concluded that there is a need for teaching specificity in the EAP context. She added that academic writing research that studied writing in specific disciplinary courses has shown that writing serves different purposes in different courses and demands students to play different social roles, and that "communicative conventions are intricately intertwined with the content for, the aims of, and student roles in writing" (p. 30). In addition, the finding in a study by Leopold (2010) opposed the claim by Spack (1988) that instructors require specialised training in the subject matters to teach writing in a particular discipline. He argues that EAP instructors can "exploit their strengths and training in genre analysis" (p. 177). Language instructors do not necessarily need special training in the subject matter if they can learn about the genres used in the disciplines. In summary, ESAP seems appealing in its approach to develop academic writing skills specific to the students' discipline.

On a different note, Widdowson (1983) argues that work on ESP "has suffered through too rigid an adherence to the principle of specificity of eventual purpose as a determining criterion for course design" (p. 15). Perhaps that is why EGAP has become a popular approach (Basturkmen, 2006).

Method

This study is part of a case study that investigated EAP students' academic writing at a language centre in a public university in Malaysia. It was carried out in 2015. Qualitative approach was used to answer the research question, and semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect the data. The semi-structured interview method was used due to its suitability for situations where the interviewer is familiar of the phenomenon being investigated. The interviewer can ask broad questions about the topic instead of ready-made response categories "that would limit the depth and breadth of the respondent's story" (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 136). A semi-structured interview has an open-ended format where the interviewer's role is to guide the interviewee for responses and prompt them for elaboration on certain topics (Dörnyei, 2007). In addition, the interviewee also has the flexibility in how to reply to the questions (Bryman, 2012).

Data Collection and Analysis

Using purposive sampling, data were collected from the interviews with 15 EAP instructors. Each interview took between 20 minutes to half an hour. Table 1 summarises the participants according to their levels of experience. Each participant is labelled as IEAP which stands for (Instructor of EAP) followed by a number to identify them.

Table 1: Interview Participants

No	Lecturer/code	Gender	Qualification	Level of Experience	
1	IEAP4	Male	First degree	1.5 years	Some experience
2	IEAP15	Female	First degree	2 years	
3	IEAP8	Female	First degree	3 years	
4	IEAP7	Male	First degree	4 years	Experienced
5	IEAP9	Female	First degree	4 years	
6	IEAP13	Female	Master's degree	4 years	
7	IEAP14	Female	Master's degree	4 years	
8	IEAP1	Female	First degree	5 years	
9	IEAP10	Female	First degree	8 years	
10	IEAP11	Female	Master's degree	10 years	Experts
11	IEAP2	Female	Master's degree	More than 10 years	
12	IEAP12	Female	Master's degree	12 years	
13	IEAP5	Female	Master's degree	13 years	
14	IEAP6	Female	First degree	More than 15 years	
15	IEAP3	Female	Master's degree	16 years	

It can be seen from Table 1 that there was almost a balanced number of participants based on their levels of experience. Three instructors were categorised as having 'some experience' as they had been teaching EAP for three years or less. One lecturer had three years of experience, one had two years of experience, and one had only taught EAP for one and a half years. Additionally, six instructors were categorised as 'experienced'. Four of them had been teaching EAP for four years, one had five years of experience and one had eight years of experience. The last category was the most experienced ones, which I referred to as 'experts' in teaching EAP.

The method used in coding the interview data was thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Bryman, 2012). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (p. 79). The analysis involved transcribing, coding and assigning themes to the data.

Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are two important things that need to be considered when using questionnaires. In qualitative research, validity and reliability can be achieved by conducting member checking (Brown, 2001; Creswell, 2014). This is done by letting the participants verify the accuracy of the data and the researcher's interpretations of the data. With regard to this study, member checking was done with the participants to discuss the interview data with them.

Findings

The findings will be presented and discussed to answer the research question, which is: What are the EAP instructors' perceptions of the EAP course in the context of EGAP and ESAP? During the interviews, EAP instructors were asked about their awareness of two approaches in EAP course design – English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) and English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP). The knowledge of these two approaches is deemed important for teachers of EAP, as it has been discussed by many EAP practitioners in relation to EAP course design and best approaches (e.g., Basturkmen, 2003 & 2006; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Jordan, 1997; Hyland, 2006; Spack, 1988; Widdowson, 1983). Initial responses from all the EAP instructors revealed that none of them knew about the two approaches at all. However, after some explanations of the meanings and differences between the two, the participants had an understanding of what they were. It was not difficult to explain to them as they were quite familiar with the concept of general approaches and specific approaches to academic writing.

After the instructors agreed that they understood what EGAP and ESAP were, they were asked which approach the EAP course was associated with. Their responses were categorised as either EGAP or ESAP. Initially, the analysis showed that more than half of EAP instructors perceived the course as using EGAP as its approach, where 10 out of 15 instructors provided responses which were congruent with the notion that course is an EGAP course. The rest of the instructors provided answers which reflected misunderstandings of the approach used by the course.

Out of the 10 EAP instructors who perceived the EAP course as an EGAP course, five of them believed that course should be changed to use ESAP in its approach. Each one of them had a different reason as to why they thought so. The instructors' reasons are due to: 1. the faculty's needs; 2. the students' disciplinary specificity needs; and 3. the students' future career needs.

One of them asserted that the ESAP approach would cater to different faculties. After describing EAP as an EGAP course, she continued,

"... it can be improved to ESAP so that, you know, we can sort of cater to different kulliyyah. That would be nice" (IEAP11).

Another instructor believed that ESAP would help students according to disciplines. She said,

"Yea ESAP. I mean if we really want to help the students according to their disciplines, we should go for the formal... that kind of English" (IEAP2).

Moreover, another instructor was looking further ahead at students' future career in giving her reason why the EAP course should use the ESAP approach. She said,

"Because in that way, the... they can learn languages that can be very useful for their future career purpose later" (IEAP8).

These three instructors are among the five participants who believed that the current EGAP-based EAP should be changed to use ESAP in its approach.

On the other hand, out of 10 EAP instructors who perceived EAP as an EGAP course, only two were of the view that the course should remain as it is. Their reasons are: 1. the

opportunities for students to learn from other disciplines; and 2. the standardisation of the course. One of them said that,

"… for the past three semesters, I've been having a classroom of mixed kulliyyahs. So, I could see how these ENGIN students learn from the humanistic students. And, yea... and they also are interested to do something else like, other than... topic related to their kulliyyah. For example, one student from ENGIN, he did a study on the community - no interaction between international and local students, because he has always been questioning the interaction between the international and local students. So, he did the study on that. He did a research on that. He wrote, he read articles on local and international students' interactions. And then he made, he wrote a very good paper". (IEAP13).

In addition, when another instructor was asked why she believed EAP should remain as an EGAP course, she responded,

"It's better to standardise it" (IEAP14).

Even though not representing the majority of the participants, these are what these two instructors thought that led them to believe, that EAP should be maintained as an EGAP-based course.

In conclusion, the themes revealed mixed feelings among the instructors about the approach that the EAP course should adopt. Even though initially they were not familiar with the concepts of EGAP and ESAP, they were able to compare the context of EAP with EGAP and ESAP once they were given an explanation about the two approaches. Generally, most instructors believed that the EAP Course is an EGAP-based course but should be changed to be based on the ESAP approach.

Discussion

The results of the interviews revealed that most of the EAP instructors' perceptions matched the course description of being an EGAP-based course, which is the mainstream approach in most EAP courses. Firstly, most EAP instructors viewed the EAP course as an EGAP course. This is not surprising as the nature of the course fulfills the criteria of an EGAP model. In fact, the course outline itself specifically refers to the transferable skills in the EAP course as part of its content (see Table 2) – reflecting the characteristics of an EGAP model which most EAP courses are based on (Hyland, 2002, 2006). Table 2 shows an excerpt of the course outline which states the inclusion of specific transferable skills in the EAP course: practical skills and critical thinking skills.

Table 2: Transferable Skills in the EAP Course Outline

		Skills *(corresponding to LOs)*	Skill development techniques	Assessment method
19	**Transferable Skills:** *Skills and how they are developed and assessed. Project and practical experience and internship*	Practical skills	Presentations, library skill, writing skills	Formative and summative
		Critical thinking skills	Critical reading skills	Formative and summative

Source: The International Islamic University Malaysia (2011)

It is important to note that during the interviews, none of the EAP instructors were aware of the term EGAP, although EGAP has become a popular approach in EAP (Basturkmen, 2006). However, they were able to relate to its meaning once the explanation was given. Despite not knowing the term, the instructors were used to the idea of transferable skills as

stated in the course outline. This suggests that the instructors' perceptions of what a language course entails may have been shaped by the concept of EGAP, at least subconsciously. The instructors were mainly exposed to the pedagogy which reflected an EGAP approach: teaching language skills common to all disciplines; showing the relationships between the skills; and transferring the general skills across contexts and purposes (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Jordan, 1997; Hyland, 2002), even though the concepts were not introduced to them as EGAP. The EAP course sits well with every feature of wide-angle EGAP. The use of one set of general skills, such as research writing skills in EAP, is a trait of 'wide-angle' EAP courses with a concept similar to English for general purposes courses (Basturkmen, 2006; Widdowson, 1983).

On a different note, the EGAP approach can be associated with the study skills model of student writing, which looks at specific study skills and more general types of skills, like strategies that students need to transfer to the contexts of their studies (Hyland, 2006; Lea & Street, 1998). The research skills applied in academic writing in the EAP course can also be regarded as part of study skills (Jordan, 1997). The study skills approach was established to accommodate student writing. Study skills such as organising, synthesising and using information can contribute to academic competence in academic settings (Gettinger & Seibert, 2002). In the context of EAP, the nature of the course is to accommodate the students to the writing competency required by their faculties.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it was revealed that the EGAP-based approaches and the study skills model that have been embedded in the EAP course may have influenced the EAP instructors in making their comments about the course. Their explanations about the teaching approaches in EAP were all related to the notions of general skills needed by the students to meet the faculty requirements, and their roles as the provider. In all interviews, none of them shared views reflecting the notions in ESAP such as disciplinary specificity or specialism. Working closely with subject specialists, a practice in ESAP, was also not seen as an option by any of the instructors. It shows that academic writing at the language centre in this study is only associated with the EGAP and the study skills model of student writing. Additionally, there was also no indication of the notions of the academic socialisation and academic literacies models being applied in the course, even by the senior instructors. For example, ideas to induct students into the culture of the faculty, the use of genres in teaching (academic socialisation) and power relations in discourse practices (academic literacies) were never mentioned or suggested. This limited perspective calls for a new orientation to expand the course to encompass other perspectives, at least as far as academic writing is concerned.

Acknowledgement

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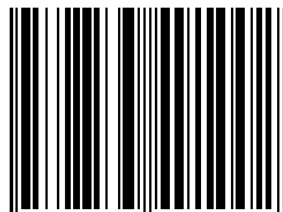Nuratikah Amid Dudin

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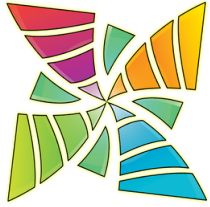Email: icbttofficial@gmail.com; conference2@egax.org

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Date: 1-2 August 2021
Venue: Kota Bharu, Kelantan, Malaysia
Website: https://submit.confbay.com/conf/icttbm4 @ http://icttbm2021.egax.org/
Email: icttbmofficial@gmail.com; conference2@egax.org

4th International Research Conference on Humanities, Social Sciences and Technology 2021 (4th IRCHST 2021)
Date: 21-22 August 2021
Venue: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Website: https://submit.confbay.com/conf/irchst4 @ http://irchst2021.egax.org/
Email: icgbssofficial@gmail.com; conference2@egax.org

3rd Penang International Multidisciplinary Conference 2021 (3rd PIMC 2021)
Date: 25-26 September 2021
Venue: Penang, Malaysia
Website: https://submit.confbay.com/conf/pimc3 @ http://3pimc2021.egax.org/
Email: pimcconferences@gmail.com; conference2@egax.org

6th International Conference on Social Sciences, Humanities and Technology 2021 (6th ICSHT 2021)
Date: 23-24 October 2021
Venue: Sabah, Malaysia
Website: https://submit.confbay.com/conf/icsht6 @ http://icsht2021.egax.org/
Email: icshtofficial@gmail.com; conference2@egax.org

4th Langkawi International Multidisciplinary Conference 2021 (4th LIMC 2021)
Date: 20-21 November 2021
Venue: Langkawi, Malaysia
Website: https://submit.confbay.com/conf/limc4 @ http://4limc2021.egax.org/
Email: limcconf2019@gmail.com; conference2@egax.org

5th International Conference on Islamic, Education and Law 2021 (5th ICIEL 2021)
Date: 18-19 December 2021
Venue: Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia
Website: https://submit.confbay.com/conf/iciel5 @ http://iciel2021.egax.org/
Email: ircmstofficial@gmail.com; conference2@egax.org

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