

Book Review

de Chazal, E. (2014). *English For Academic Purposes*. Oxford University Press. xix + 380 pp. (softcover). ISBN: 978-0-19-442371-7

**Reviewed by
Alex Garin**

Introduction

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is a well-established area of English teaching and research. Usually, the main goal of EAP is to prepare learners for study at university level by teaching integrated academic and language skills, systems and competencies, as well as raising their awareness of academic conventions and culture. EAP does not usually teach academic subjects themselves. Beyond that, "...EAP seeks to engage learners in a critical understanding of the increasingly varied contexts and practices of academic communication" (Hyland, 2006, p. 2). With increasing globalization and consequently the number of international university students, EAP is rapidly assuming a more prominent role in language teaching. It is therefore vital, particularly for university teachers, to continue to learn about the main aspects of EAP and to be skilled at teaching them. This professional development could in turn benefit the learners in EAP classrooms.

The purpose of this review is to introduce the reader to *English for Academic Purposes*, a book that focuses on the main aspects of EAP and their pedagogical implications. The review will highlight the skills, systems and competencies mentioned above, namely discourse, vocabulary and grammar (systems), reading, writing, listening, speaking (skills) and critical thinking. Each of these constitutes a chapter in the book. Teaching implications for each chapter will also be discussed. The author of the book is a teacher, teacher trainer, and EAP course book writer, with over 20 years of experience of working in international EAP contexts. He is also a former lecturer at University College London, which houses one of the leading EAP programs in the world.

Texts

The topic of chapter 3 is academic texts. Most EAP syllabi and classes center around a text-based approach to teaching. Learners typically have to research, select, read, and critically analyze academic texts. de Chazal (2014) points out the textual variety in EAP programs – journal articles, textbook chapters, coursebook extracts, and spoken texts of lectures, seminars, and presentations. This means that academic texts can serve as a model for content, structure and language in learners' own written and spoken production.

In terms of content, structure and style de Chazal (2014, p. 59) stresses that "...a text is not isolated and decontextualized, but connected to and informed by other related texts, its purpose and expectations of its audience". It is therefore important for the EAP teacher to make learners aware that by engaging with a range of texts and producing their own, they can become members of an academic discourse community and more knowledgeable about their disciplines.

Depending on genre, audience and purpose, a given text will have a set of essential elements. The latter is a concept introduced in chapter 3. de Chazal (2014) cites common examples of essential elements in EAP texts – narrative, problem-solution, cause-effect, argument, evidence, exemplification, citation, evaluation, perspective and many others. A given text will not feature all of these, but rather a specific combination depending on its genre, purpose and discipline. If learners are made aware of the essential elements in model texts, they can construct their own texts more easily while concurrently adhering to academic conventions.

Regarding discourse organization, de Chazal (2014) defines coherence and cohesion – the former concerns the connection of the text to meaning and language and the latter to meaning and ideas. However, unlike many EAP course books that focus only on the most common linking phrases (i.e., on the other hand, in addition, first, second, third), chapter 3 expands on a much greater range of cohesive devices. According to de Chazal (2014), these may include synonyms, antonyms, metaphors, cohesive noun phrases, pronouns and determiners, contextualizers, interactors, macro-text organizers and focusers. Oftentimes, learners and even EAP teachers are not aware of the presence of these in the text and how they serve to connect clauses, sentences and paragraphs together. Chapter 3 gives a detailed description, purpose and examples of each kind of cohesive device, which can beneficially raise awareness of the EAP teacher.

From a pedagogical perspective, the EAP teacher needs to carefully plan the textual content of the course. Representative texts need to be selected, ordered and presented

to the learners and their content, structural and linguistic features highlighted. Time in the course for developing research and critical thinking skills also needs to be allocated. Learners need to know how to efficiently and effectively look for texts on their own, using library and online resources. And how to critically evaluate the validity and purpose of each text.

Language

Chapter 4 of the book is about academic language. Two of the main of its features mentioned in the chapter are its complexity and density. The reason for this is the prevalence of the noun phrase structure, using which scholars can convey a high amount of topical content using minimal word count. And since academic journals and books usually have strict word count requirements, space is at a premium. de Chazal (2014, p. 90) notes that "...high frequency of nouns, adjectives, prepositions and determiners in academic texts is easily explained: they make up the bulk of most noun phrases, which in turn make up the bulk of most academic texts".

The focus of the chapter is also on vocabulary organization. In terms of its meaning and function, a word is best comprehended in its context and teachers need to organize vocabulary in a principled way for learners (de Chazal, 2014). This point connects to the previous section on texts. One effective way to teach vocabulary is to select a range of texts relevant for learners' needs that show this language in context. Furthermore, the focus should be not only on individual words, but on collocations, especially noun phrases mentioned above. It should not be on decontextualized, individual word lists, as in this case much of the nuanced function and meaning of vocabulary can be lost. de Chazal (2014) argues that contextualized vocabulary learning from academic texts, with the focus on collocations, is a principled, meaningful and encompassing approach to EAP language teaching.

A related point is the inseparability of grammar and vocabulary. Many English language course books, not only in EAP, present these two separately. However, collocations cannot be separated from their grammatical context and learning of grammar rules must be related to the acquisition of collocations containing this grammar (Hill, 2000). This further supports the principle of teaching academic language in a wider context of phrase, sentence, paragraph or full text, not as a decontextualized item. That way learners can understand the language better, and produce it more accurately and appropriately.

Critical thinking

In chapter 5 de Chazal (2014) provides examples of essential elements in EAP critical thinking – analysis, argument, critique, evaluation, exemplification, hypothesis, inference, stance, and many others. Additionally, Wallace and Wray (2011) define critical reading as evaluating the amount of reasoning and evidence provided by the author for their claims and critical writing as being able to persuade their audience to agree with their arguments.

Critical thinking is one of the most essential skills for EAP learners to acquire. As stated above, it requires an in-depth comprehension of academic texts and critical analysis of the author’s stance, motivations, biases, and purpose for writing. And in turn being able to synthesize citations into their own writing (or speaking) from a range of often diverse and contradicting sources. Usually this is very challenging for learners due to academic texts’ density and complexity of language and content.

To help learners develop their critical thinking skills, de Chazal (2014) suggests a range of cognitive tasks with academic texts, such as researching and consulting, comparing and contrasting, noticing, selecting, evaluating, processing and integrating. The author provides a detailed description of each task. The evidence in this section suggests that critical thinking cannot be an afterthought in EAP classroom. It requires deliberate consideration, planning, and integration into the course curriculum by the EAP teacher. It also requires integration with the language skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking, which are the focus of the sections below.

Reading

In chapter 6 the focus is on reading. In the English classroom, the most well-known reading activities are probably predicting the content, meaning comprehension questions at the end of the text, skimming and scanning. But as has been mentioned in the section on texts, EAP reading involves library research skills, synthesis of information, critical thinking skills, and the focus on language (de Chazal, 2014). Grabe and Stoller (2002) describe two distinct models of reading, bottom-up and top-down. The former suggests that the reader creates a step-by-step cognitive translation of the text, without using background knowledge. The latter implies that reading depends on reader’s goals and expectations, with the use of background knowledge. The two models overlap and support each other. Related to these are the challenges learners face when reading. de Chazal (2014) cites linguistic, non-linguistic (graphs, charts, visuals), and cognitive (density and complexity of texts) challenges. The author also mentions social, cultural,

psychological and knowledge-based challenges. The first set may be said to correspond closer to bottom-up processes, the second to top-down.

Given the complexity of skills, challenges and reading processes above, EAP programs should feature a significant amount of both reading input and skills work through a range of reading tasks. The level of difficulty for the learners will often depend not only on the particular text, but especially on the nature and purpose of a task. A highly difficult text may still be used with intermediate level learners if the task is designed in a way that allows them to take advantage of the knowledge they already have.

Another point in the chapter is that the goal of each EAP teacher should be their learner independence. They should be able to utilize the reading skills acquired in the classroom away from it, without the help from the teacher, by using technology and collaborating with their peers (de Chazal, 2014). Perhaps only then learners can derive the greatest benefit from any EAP program, by becoming better readers after they finish it.

Writing

In chapter 7 the main aspects of EAP writing are outlined. Among these are more well-known concepts, such as writing processes, the structure of essays and reports, and citations conventions. These are often mentioned in numerous writing course books and SLA literature. However, a few less common, but still important points are also given.

The first one has to do with feedback. de Chazal (2014) writes that this may involve evaluation of own writing by the learners, as well as teacher and peer feedback. In addition, Hyland and Hyland (2006) argue that learners usually prefer written feedback from the teacher to other kinds of feedback.

Teacher feedback can be in the form of both written comments in the draft and spoken comments during class or tutorial. Potentially, this can be one of the most effective tools for learner improvement because their attention is drawn to the areas of writing that require work, as well as the strong points. In a sense, a learner in a group class can temporarily switch to one-to-one environment with the instructor, where much more individual help can be given to each learner. Teacher knowledge and experience in writing feedback are important in this context, as they need to quickly identify both the strong and weak areas in learner writing and provide concise and useful comments.

The second useful point in the chapter is writing with the students. de Chazal (2014) suggests that EAP teacher should do the same writing task as the learners. This has

several benefits – validating the task, ensuring high quality of model texts, developing materials for future courses, and better understanding of the challenges that learners go through while doing the task. In class this approach works best with short writing tasks, like a paragraph. But individual essay components can also be practiced (i.e., introduction, main body paragraph, citations). Practicing writing with the learners could in turn improve teacher feedback, as the instructor should gain a better understanding of the writing process.

In my own experience as a writing teacher in a university context, the practices of written and spoken feedback and writing with the learners have usually proven to be effective and it is a positive confirmation to see them aligned with research principles in the book.

Listening

In chapter 8 the focus is on EAP listening. Despite a common perception that listening is a passive and receptive skill, it is very much active and complex. de Chazal (2014) highlights the concept of multimodality in listening. To comprehend meaning in a lecture or presentation, learners must potentially interpret input from a range of differing spoken, written and visual sources, and be able to interpret the meaning. Furthermore, the structure, content and language in academic lectures may differ widely depending on the institution or discipline.

Due to this complexity, learners need to adopt a critical approach to listening. de Chazal (2014) recommends strategies such as adopting a critical stance to content, awareness of lecture styles, note-taking and slide annotation, identifying the purpose of the lecture, and dealing with accents and colloquial language. It is the responsibility of EAP teacher to raise learners' awareness of these and ensure their regular practice and application.

In contrast to listening input in general English classes, EAP lectures are typically not simplified in terms of their speed, vocabulary level and content. But there are ways to adjust the difficulty of this input. Rost (2011) suggests schemata activation activities, learners working in pairs to share comprehended input, pausing the input to allow learners to process it, providing a script for the listening input, and identifying sequence from a list of events in the narrative. Related to this, in the chapter on listening de Chazal (2014) provides in-text support strategies for teachers – input structure should be familiar, contain signposting and cohesive language and definitions for any unfamiliar terms.

Overall, the chapter highlights the complexity of EAP listening, the challenges learners face with it and the supporting strategies for both teachers and learners. Oftentimes listening does not have the highest priority in EAP programs, with the main attention given to writing and reading. However, this chapter shows its importance and integration with other skills and systems. After all, in their disciplines, learners will spend a significant amount of time listening to lectures and they need to have the appropriate skills and strategies to do it well.

Speaking

In chapter 9 de Chazal (2014) contends that speaking in EAP is primarily focused on meaning and content to be communicated. Speaking in EAP mainly includes seminars, presentations, and tutorials.

The main aspect of EAP seminars is the content of reading or listening input. Learners read about a topic or listen to a lecture and then discuss what they have understood from it in groups. de Chazal (2014) argues that a key feature of seminars is learner preparation, as they mainly express their views on content they have read previously, not their in-the-moment opinions. Seminars can be a very productive and interactive way to learn. Students can learn about different perspectives of their classmates and receive feedback on their own views.

However, the inability or difficulty to contribute to the group discussion is a very common challenge. Particularly when some of the learners in the group are less proficient English speakers than other members. The former often cannot follow the thread of the discussion or struggle to insert their own comments. Hence effective preparation is important. A thorough knowledge of the topic can often compensate for the lack of communication skills.

Regarding tutorials, de Chazal (2014) mentions that they usually have more teaching from the tutor and less students per group compared to seminars. They also feature group discussion, but the main aim is to provide continuous assessment and support for each learner and to monitor their progress.

When it comes to presentations, de Chazal (2014) writes that content and delivery are important in their assessment. Again, learner preparation is key. An academic presentation typically needs to have a clear argument, coherent content, logical organization, relevant visuals, as well as good timing, pace, and pronunciation from the presenter delivery. Needless to say, the more time is spent on preparation for these features, the better the result should be. From the teacher's side, good models of

previous presentations should be provided, and the assessment criteria should be made clear to the learners.

Limitations and conclusion

English for Academic Purposes outlines the main aspects of EAP in great detail, with clear organization and accessible language. It is especially aimed for practicing teachers, as each chapter has useful and applicable advice for classroom lessons. Furthermore, English skills teachers can utilize many sections in the book for their classes, as many principles and practices described go beyond EAP and are more universal to English language teaching.

One limitation of the book is its focus on practice and not on theory. While it does reference some of the most recent EAP research, it does not describe it in any amount of detail. But this limitation is perhaps overcome by its further reading sections. After each chapter the book has recommendations for further reading by the leading EAP and SLA researchers. So theory-oriented readers can also find it useful.

And a few words about the scope of this review. Only the chapters most relevant to EAP skills and systems are covered. The book also has chapters on assessment and materials design. Designing effective course assessments and materials is often a complex and difficult process, requiring teams of highly trained professionals, so it goes beyond the scope of this review and even the scope of the book. That is one reason these chapters are not discussed here. Space constraints is another. At the same time, EAP teachers obviously can and do design their own assessment tools and materials. Though these are usually simpler and less time-consuming than the ones designed by professional teams.

Overall, *English for Academic Purposes* is an excellent resource not only for EAP teachers, but also for any teacher working in a university environment. It can also be useful for any teacher interested in the field of EAP.

References

- de Chazal, E. (2014). *English for Academic Purposes*. Oxford University Press.
- Grabe, W. & Stoller, L. (2002). *Teaching and Researching Reading*. Routledge.
- Hill, J. (2000). Revising priorities: from grammatical failure to collocation success. In M. Lewis (Ed.), *Teaching collocation: Further developments in the lexical approach* (pp. 47-69). Language Teaching Publications.

- Hyland, K. (2006). *English for Academic Purposes: An Advanced Resource Book*.
Routledge.
- Hyland, K. & Hyland, F. (eds.). (2006). *Feedback in Second Language Writing: Contexts
and Issues*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rost, M. (2011). *Teaching and Researching Listening*. Routledge.
- Wallace, M. & Wray, A. (2011). *Critical Reading and Writing for Postgraduates 2e*.
London: Sage Publications.

