The Routledge Handbook of English for Academic Purposes

Ken Hyland, Philip Shaw

Introduction

Publication details

Ken Hyland, Philip Shaw
Published online on: 25 Jan 2016

Accessed on: 29 Dec 2023

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT

Full terms and conditions of use: https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.
1

INTRODUCTION

Ken Hyland and Philip Shaw

EAP: growth and significance

The term English for academic purposes (EAP) covers language research and instruction that focuses on the communicative needs and practices of individuals working in academic contexts. It therefore includes a range of activities from designing listening materials to describing the discourse of doctoral defences, and while often characterised as a practical affair, it goes beyond preparing learners for study in English to understanding the kinds of literacy found in the academy. EAP is, then, a branch of applied linguistics, consisting of a significant body of research into effective teaching and assessment, descriptions of the linguistic and discoursal structures of academic texts, and analysis of the textual practices of academics.

It is a field which has witnessed rapid expansion and development over the past thirty years. The term EAP seems to have been coined by Tim Johns in 1974 and made its first published appearance in a collection of papers edited by Cowie and Heaton in 1977 (Jordan, 2002). Driven by the growth of English as the leading language for the acquisition, dissemination and demonstration of academic knowledge, EAP has emerged from the fringes of the English for specific purposes (ESP) movement in the 1980s to become an important force in English language teaching and research. Drawing its strength from broad theoretical foundations, a commitment to research-based language education, and the subject-matter expertise of its students, EAP has sought to reveal some of the constraints of academic contexts on language use and to develop ways for learners to gain control over these. These learners, moreover, are now a diverse and heterogeneous group which includes not only the traditional EAP constituency of undergraduates studying in English as an additional language (EAL), but also secondary and primary students and academics writing for publication or presenting papers at conferences. All of these must, in some way, gain fluency in the conventions of English language academic discourses to understand their disciplines and to successfully navigate their learning or their careers.

EAP has also changed its character over the years. It may originally have been a purely practical affair concerned with local contexts and the needs of particular students, but as the interconnectedness of the contexts and our understanding of the needs have developed, EAP has become a much more theoretically grounded and research-informed enterprise. As the chapters in this volume illustrate, the communicative demands of the modern university involve far more than simply controlling linguistic error or polishing style. So while EAP continues to involve syllabus design, needs analysis and materials development, it has had to respond to the heightened, more complex and highly diversified nature of
such demands. Supported by an expanding range of publications and research journals, there is a growing awareness that students, including native English speakers, have to take on new roles and engage with knowledge in new ways when they enter university. They find that they need to write and read unfamiliar genres and participate in novel speech events.

The chapters in this book describe some of the diverse ways that EAP seeks to understand and engage learners in a critical understanding of the increasingly varied contexts and practices of academic communication. They also suggest something of the contribution which EAP has made to applied linguistics and language education. Assisted by a healthy receptiveness to the understandings of different perspectives, ESP has consistently provided grounded insights into the structures and meanings of texts, the demands placed by academic contexts on communicative behaviours, and the pedagogic practices by which these behaviours can be developed. As a result, EAP has consistently been at the front line of both theory development and innovative practice in teaching English. EAP is, in essence, research-based language education and the applied nature of the field has been its strength, tempering a possible overindulgence in theory with a practical utility.

But this practical orientation has also been a serious weakness, particularly in universities, where EAP comes to be seen as a low-status service activity. The assumption underlying this practice is that there is a single literacy which students have failed to acquire, probably because of gaps in school curricula or the insufficient application of learners themselves. Students are seen as coming to their university studies with a deficit of literacy skills which can be topped up in a few English classes. In this view, literacy can thus be taught to students as a set of discrete, value-free rules and technical skills usable in any situation. In fact, however, the English we encounter and are expected to produce in academic settings differs in cognitively significant ways – by genre, by stage of writing and by discipline – from that which we find outside of the academy. Facilitating the learning of this discourse requires time, resources, and the co-operation and respect of subject specialists.

The rapid expansion in the number of learners of English for Academic Purposes has led to a similar expansion in the number of EAP teachers. And this means that many – probably most – of the teachers of EAP around the world are not native speakers of English. The needs of these non-native teachers are different from those of native speakers, and this recognition has led to new developments in EAP materials and teacher training courses.

Some key features of EAP

As illustrated in Table 1.1, EAP rests on four main principles which reflect its origins in ESP and which distinguish it from other areas of TESOL.

Authenticity

Authenticity is one inheritance from ESP and a key concept in EAP. Originally it simply meant using texts in class where the vocabulary and grammar had not been simplified, but it now includes classroom uses of real examples of spoken, written, graphical and non-verbal communication. It requires us to distinguish between different types of written texts, and embed all this textual material in authentic tasks. This means teachers are encouraged not only to use real texts, but also to process them as their students would in the real world. However, although the mantra of authenticity encourages teachers to use authentic texts as genre models, where students need to see how cohesion, coherence and rhetorical
structure are maintained, authentic texts do not always fulfil these criteria, and teachers also have to be willing to tailor a text to improve its readability or to highlight a given feature. More broadly, recognising the value of authentic tasks and models for students has encouraged research into academic texts of a wide variety of types on a massive scale, both increasing our understanding of academic genres and improving methods for analysing them.

**Groundedness**

EAP has consistently provided grounded insights into the structures and meanings of texts, the demands placed by academic or workplace contexts on communicative behaviours, and the pedagogic practices by which these behaviours can be developed. EAP is founded not only on the analysis of texts but also, less often but increasingly frequently, the contexts in which these texts are found. But while the main contribution of EAP has been to offer a pedagogy for learners with identifiable academic communicative needs, the process of working towards this goal has seen important theoretical and methodological concepts sharpened and refined, most notably those of genre, discipline, community and needs. Importantly, the groundedness of EAP has also meant that teachers, and many students too, do not just read the research, but are actively involved in creating it. Teachers have become practitioners as they consider the discourses of the students they are teaching, and of the disciplines and genres that their students are studying. By understanding the genres we teach and the students we work with, our research feeds back into the design of curricula, courses, materials and tasks.

**Interdisciplinarity**

EAP is not a theory or a method but an area of study. As we have suggested, this does not mean that EAP lacks a theory, but it is an application of several theories and methods to specific registers. EAP draws its strength from a broad and eclectic range of different ideas, and its effectiveness lies in employing the ideas that offer the most for understanding communication and for classroom practice. Among these, we can include: systemic linguistics, discourse analysis, pragmatics, critical theory, social constructionism, communicative language teaching, contrastive rhetoric, socio-cognitive theory and the sociology of scientific knowledge.
Relevance

Finally, EAP tries to be relevant to students. It relies on needs analysis to systematically identify the specific skills, texts and communicative practices that a particular group of learners will use. Research and needs assessments are fundamental to EAP approaches to course design. Thus, in some circumstances, this may mean identifying a number of general skills for a heterogeneous group of students from different fields or for freshman or pre-university students who need to bridge the English they are familiar with at school to that which is expected in the disciplines. Here, various skills related to lecture comprehension and participating in seminars may be needed together with key writing practices such as using sources, impersonality and nominalization. If a needs analysis indicates that the study situation is more specific, then it is likely that instruction will focus on the genres required in the discipline and the preferred patterns of communication which students need to succeed.

The idea of needs therefore provides a link between perception and practice, and underlines research, authenticity and interdisciplinarity. While at one time relevance involved simply making sure we were teaching useful lexis and grammar, today it acknowledges wider contexts. EAP teachers have increasingly recognised that texts and tasks are enmeshed in other texts and in the situations in which they are used. For research, this means understanding how texts work in particular disciplines, seeing genres, for instance, as repeated kinds of social activity designed to be both recognizable and convincing to specialist readers rather than just arrangements of forms. For teaching, it means preparing students for a range of activities focusing on communication rather than just specific aspects of language. The concept of needs, however, has been criticized as privileging institutional interpretations of student needs and so creating courses which accommodate student learning to the demands of powerful institutional values and practices. We turn to this issue now.

Caveats, limitations, and cautions

While these characteristics underpin the strengths of EAP, they also contribute to its limitations, in particular: a tendency to work for rather than with subject specialists, a vulnerability to claims that it ignores students’ cultures, and a reluctance to critically engage with the values of institutional goals and practices.

The first issue arises from the practical orientation of EAP, which tends to push it down the pecking order of university subjects, so that it is seen as subservient to the more prestigious theoretical disciplines rather than developing its own independent subject knowledge and skills. This leads to what Raimes (1991) calls ‘the butler’s stance’ on the part of EAP, which acts to de-professionalize teachers and allows universities to marginalize EAP units. EAP comes to be regarded as a ‘service activity’, shunted off into special units, and marginalized as a remedial exercise designed to fix-up students’ problems.

As we noted above, this conceptualization makes it impossible to address the real issues. EAP has generally not responded robustly to this misconception and too often accepted the underlying assumption that there is a single literacy which students have failed to acquire. Literacy can thus be taught to students as a set of discrete, value-free rules and technical skills usable in any situation. However, the idea of professional communities, each with its own particular practices, genres, and communicative conventions, leads us towards a more specific role for EAP at the same time as a growing body of literature into how knowledge is socially constructed through disciplinary discourses, strengthens the theoretical underpinnings of this view.
Bourdieu famously observed that academic discourse is no one’s mother tongue, but the children of middle-class families with a mastery of the standard language find it considerably easier (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1965). It is more difficult for learners to acquire academic English if their own set of discourses or ‘culture’ is less congruent with those of the academy, whether or not some kind of English is their first language. EAP has validly been charged with failing to engage with students’ cultures and it is only in the last decade or so that EAP has begun to take issues of culture and background seriously. This is partly because notions of culture often essentialize learner groups: they lump individuals together, ignore differences and devalue their practices. This neglect is also due to the influence of Western, and particularly American, conceptions of individualism which are highly suspicious of the idea of culture. But contrastive rhetoric, and its more recent incarnation as intercultural rhetoric, has offered insights for teachers into how students’ culturally preferred ways of writing might impact on the ways they write in English. Problems remain, however, so that discussions of ‘culture’ can be ethnocentric, for example, and it is not always possible to distinguish the impact of first language or limited proficiency on writing difficulties. Furthermore, academic writing in a given discipline is an expression of the culture of the discipline, which is by no means that of any particular state or region, or even class.

Nevertheless, there is growing evidence that different groups tend to use language in different ways: employing different organisational patterns, making different persuasive appeals, using different ways of incorporating material, and relying on different linguistic features. The process of acquiring the norms of academic English or the English of a discipline must be different for these different starting points.

Understandings of culture, moreover, remind us that we are members of several cultures simultaneously – ethnic, age, disciplinary, etc. – and raises the possibility of conflicts students may experience in these multiple memberships. As our reference above to different kinds of English suggests, there are potential clashes between, for example, the ways that academic and ethnic cultures use English, which raises the issue of non-standard forms and the question of whose norms will be used to judge the conventions student writers use. Many post-colonial countries have developed thriving indigenous varieties of English which are widely used and accepted locally but which diverge from international standards. EAP teachers now take the issue of appropriate models for EAP seriously, exploring how far the professions, corporations and disciplines in which they work tolerate differences in rhetorical styles.

Finally, the expansion of EAP as a force in language education has been accompanied by a growing sense of disquiet concerning the socio-political implications of both the dominance of English at the expense of other academic languages, and the additional burden which such demands place on students and scholars alike. The advantage of a near-universal academic lingua franca must be seen against the loss of linguistic diversity and the difficulties for students and academics required to study and publish in a foreign language. Whether or not this dominance is the result of a conspiracy orchestrated by political and economic interests or the legacy of US and British colonialism, it has real effects on the lives of students, academics and universities across the globe who must read, write and often publish in a language that is not their own.

This raises the issue of EAP’s response to these issues and whether it is a pragmatic or a critical discipline. Do we see our role as developing students’ academic literacy skills to facilitate their effective participation in academic communities? Or do we have a responsibility to provide learners with ways of examining the academic socio-political status quo to critique these cultural and linguistic resources? But things are seldom as starkly polarized in the real world and it is a rare EAP teacher who consciously sets out with the
intention to replicate existing power relations by teaching prestigious forms of discourse. While criticized for taking an ‘accommodationist’ view of language learning, designed to fit students into the cogs of the institutional machine (e.g. Benesch, 2001), the EAP agenda has always been to help learners gain access to ways of communicating that have accrued cultural capital in particular communities, demystifying academic discourses to provide learners with control over the resources that might enhance their career opportunities. In the natural sciences, at least, it has to be recognized that the discourse to be acquired has emerged over the centuries and has the prestige to be expected from the stunning achievements of the disciplines. Nonetheless, teachers trying to do their best for students generally recognize that developing an understanding of the connections between genres and power makes these structures more amenable to analysis and more readily challenged where this is desirable.

There is, then, a growing sense that a social-theoretical stance is needed to fully understand what happens in institutions to make discourses the way they are. Increasingly, studies have turned to examining the ideological impact of expert discourses, the social distribution of valued literacies, the access non-native and novice members have to prestigious genres, and the way control of specialised discourses is related to status and credibility (Hyland, 2004). Clearly EAP must engage with issues of power and help learners develop a critical awareness of how language works to support institutional inequalities (Pennycook, 1997; Benesch, 2001), but it has yet to seriously confront them. While there is greater awareness of the relationships between language and power and of the inequalities which support the prestigious literacy practices we teach, effective classroom responses are often constrained by the institutional contexts in which teachers work. EAP teachers are frequently employed as vulnerable, short-term instructors in marginalized ‘service units’ and ways of facilitating change in such environments remain to be explored.

**Conceptions of EAP**

The chapters in this volume provide a rich commentary on these issues as well as a conspectus of what is going on in the expanding world of EAP teaching and research. They are ordered from the most general and ideological issues to the most particular and operational, but of course ideology affects practice and in an applied field the demands of practice restrict the applicability of ideology.

Hyland starts off with a discussion of the tension between a general EAP addressing a generalized academic discourse and dedicated disciplinary-discourse instruction. The research and teaching sides of EAP often pull in different directions here. Research into needs suggests splitting, in that rather specific discoursal practices are found in each discipline, while the demands of teaching tend to encourage lumping into broader groupings for practical reasons.

A more urgent version of a similar tension appears in Lillis and Tuck’s account of the academic-literacy tradition. Literacy is not a generalized skill but grounded in individual contexts. Students come from diverse discoursal backgrounds, and in a democratic society it is not a teacher’s duty to devalue the expressions or the insights of one group in favour of those of another. Ways must be found for the academy to welcome incomers. But once again, as Lillis and Tuck point out, traditional academic discourse and the structures it represents are strong, and discourse-analytical or EAP voices are weak. In their teaching practice, teachers will often find themselves doing something very like assimilating the outsiders to the dominant discourse, because that is where success lies for the individual.
Introduction

However, Mauranen, Hynninen and Ranta identify one area in which traditional discrimination against outsiders is breaking down. Globalization means that more and more leading teachers and researchers do not have English as their first language, and the academic world is responding to this by erasing the privilege that is ascribed to L1 English. It is hard enough to be highly proficient in a second language, but the rise of attitudes defining English as a language with no special ties to one culture or state means that the proficient user no longer needs to be branded forever as non-native. EAP teachers need to ensure that their work reflects this shift of attitudes.

EAP has focused (not necessarily rightly) on easing the entry of second-language users into their disciplinary environments, but in North America it has grown up alongside a tradition aimed at inducting university entrants into a new general university culture. Tardy and Jwa describe the relation between US composition studies and EAP, which is a complex one that highlights differences in values that bear careful consideration. Composition studies has seen as its task to help students acquire an effective voice of their own, and beyond that a particular critical or humane stance which may stand in deliberate opposition to some demands of the university. Once again, there is tension between EAP’s somewhat instrumental stance and wider educational aims which can rarely be adopted in EAP for practical reasons.

Contexts for EAP

The second section of the volume examines some of the contexts in which EAP teaching and research take place, showing how the strands described above appear differently in different contexts.

Airey examines the situation in Europe, in which most countries have academic institutions at all levels operating primarily in the national language, but often using English-language reading material. A rapidly increasing trend here is fully English-medium instruction, with the dual aims of improving the English of local students and recruiting from outside the country. These aims are not wholly congruent because the first should involve conscious attention to developing disciplinary biliteracy, mastery of the disciplinary discourses in both languages, while the second calls for monolingual use of English as a (neutral) lingua franca.

In post-colonial environments, English is often the predominant language of secondary and tertiary education. Parkinson shows that the system in South Africa throws up many students with very diverse cultural and class backgrounds and correspondingly diverse discourses and proficiencies. Universities employ EAP teachers to deal with the situation but the risk is that they apply a deficit interpretation and alienate these learners. She argues that ways have to be found, within the academic-literacies tradition, to make use of their resources and suit the university to them rather than the other way round, but this has to be done without the universities losing contact with transnational disciplinary ‘communities’.

Like Europe, China has a well-established national-language infrastructure in higher education, alongside which there is a trend or fashion for English-medium instruction with somewhat mixed goals. Cheng shows, however, that a major difference from Europe is the existence of a well-established (though low-status) tradition of general English teaching at university, tightly linked to high-stakes English tests, and (like US composition studies) with general liberal-education aims. In this context, Cheng does not see rapid growth of a needs-oriented EAP approach.

By contrast, EAP has a long and respected tradition in Latin America. The ambitious survey by Salager-Mayer, Llopis de Segura and Guerra Ramos shows that the needs across
the continent are still chiefly for reading and writing in English in a context in which instruction is entirely in the national language. The survey confirms the status of Brazilian EAP as a powerful research-based activity, and the more precarious position of the field in other countries. The well-defined range of skills taught is a strength as well as a limitation.

**EAP and language skills**

The third section focuses in a more detailed way on a selection of the skills likely to be required in academic work in English. Perhaps the most characteristic academic skill is to read material and recreate it in writing, and each half of this activity requires both language proficiency and more intangible local or disciplinary literacy. Hirvella points out that intertextuality is a key issue in the academic discourse that is ‘no one’s first language’, and shows that proficiency and lexical knowledge are not the key issues in summary-writing, but that nevertheless second-language writers are less likely to attempt more involved forms of paraphrasing. More generally, new entrants to the university are inclined to rely on the general ‘web culture’ for both their sources and their intertextuality practices, and these practices situated outside the academy are likely not to be valued in the new environment.

A basic skill for EAP learners is of course language proficiency. Manchón addresses the issues in respect of ‘writing to learn language’. It is more laborious to write in a language with which one is less familiar, even if the product is of a high standard. But multilingualism has affordances not available to monolingual writers and EAP needs to develop techniques for making use of them, particularly as this would reduce the risk of treating the multilingual writer as deficient.

The lower fluency that may be experienced in a language that one does not fully master is also an acute issue in oral dialogic interaction. Basturkmen shows that although one may get by without oral participation, the demand for it is very stressful and failure to participate may result in the assignment of an undesirable student identity. Furthermore, it is in dialogic interaction that students may be scaffolded into use of disciplinary terminology and discourse, so targeted practice is of great importance.

Lack of automaticity in processing makes bottom-up listening difficult in a second language. Rodgers and Webb discuss listening to lectures, emphasizing both the importance of a language-proficiency factor – vocabulary size – and the potential benefits but also risks of the increasing role of visual support in lecturing.

Even more than in listening to lectures, adequate vocabulary is a prerequisite for learning from written texts. Coxhead reports research showing that the threshold for vocabulary knowledge is quite high but the range of vocabulary required for academic reading is limited, in the sense that words from colloquial, literary or everyday (such as cooking) registers are not required. What are required are the disciplinary terms that it is the job of the subject specialist to teach, and the tricky general academic terms which appear across a range of disciplines and will be presupposed by subject specialists. Coxhead’s conclusion is that it is the EAP teacher’s role to identify and focus on these words to facilitate reading.

**Research perspectives**

The next section of the handbook discusses a variety of ways of conceptualizing and investigating the complexities of EAP which have transformed our understanding and are transforming our practice.
Introduction

The best-developed theoretical perspective on language and language practices relevant to EAP is, as Hood shows, systemic-functional linguistics (SFL). By identifying functional units at all levels, SFL makes it possible to characterize exactly how the differing cognition and purposes of texts in the various disciplines have differing textual exponents, and thus to design appropriate tasks at the relevant linguistic level of students.

The data available for linguistic and textual analysis have been transformed by corpus analysis within the lifetime of EAP as a field. Nesi’s chapter describes the many corpora now available, which make it genuinely possible for practising teachers and their students to investigate the register and organization of academic writing in various disciplines.

Beyond the necessary grasp of text and register patterns, a deep and well-grounded understanding of learning environments is increasingly a requirement of effective EAP. The methodology for this derives from ethnography and, as Paltridge and Starfield show, it is attention to the specifics of the situations in which texts are used and produced that make it possible for EAP studies to be grounded in the experience and necessary practices of learners.

It is the essence of academic writing that it builds on the work of others and therefore both manifest and constitutive intertextuality are key features, as Hirvella noted and Pecorari reminds us. Manifest intertextuality shows the sources of ideas or even wordings and conventions in academic writing differ from those in the on-line world in which many learners are at home. When EAP teachers encounter student failures in this area, called plagiarism, they find themselves in an area in which feelings run high and careful thought and action is needed.

Constitutive intertextuality helps shape texts into conformity with the structure of previous texts; that is how writers reproduce and recreate genres. This has been a very rich angle of approach in EAP. Here, Shaw, taking up the theme of groundedness, discusses in particular the network of syntagmatic, paradigmatic and diachronic links in which a text is situated.

A further perspective which is central to EAP in most situations is discussed by O’Halloran, Tan and Smith, who give an account of the increasingly multimodal nature of EAP communication. In particular, they point out not only that academic discourses are increasingly encoded in a variety of media, but also that making multimodal (electronic) resources available to learners may make academic discourse practices more accessible to students who now come from environments where multimodality is more familiar than monomodal texts.

As we noted above, the familiar observation that different educational systems or cultures favour different writing styles or move choices has been contested and was difficult to operationalize until the notion of genre was available. Reflecting a more social-theoretically sophisticated view than earlier writers, Connor, Ene and Traversa refer to a ‘complex notion of the interactions of different cultural forces’. These forces operate at many levels from the nation to the discourse community, and they form the texts produced by an individual (or collective) within a particular genre. The individual text has to be seen as the product of active agents who are members of overlapping communities, rather than of a particular unitary culture.

Beyond deeper and broader understanding of academic text production, a key insight of the last quarter-century is that the aim of EAP teachers and researchers to facilitate the entry of their students into the cultures of their target ‘discourse communities’ can lead to complicity in power inequalities. But given the power relation in classrooms, attempts to overcome this can result in forcing students to be liberated. The solution, according to Macallister, is ‘an engagement with the local positions of students’, making sure that classroom practices give space for students’ own political understanding and development.
Pedagogic genres

Part V deals with some important pedagogic genres. Some genres in the academy are very well researched, others are discussed here almost for the first time. These differences reflect discrepancies in the accessibility of data. Texts that are spoken and/or occluded are more difficult to collect than those which are written and public. The age of the media carrying the genre, its importance in the eyes of the discipline, and its value for EAP teaching are all also significant factors in determining the volume of research carried out.

The key genres for undergraduates to produce are written and monologic. Graves and White show that, like seminars, these genres are varied and grounded in local educational traditions and values. Very different traditions of support also exist. Graves and White raise an issue that is latent in much discussion of EAP – the need for greater awareness on the part of instructors of the genres they expect, so that students can start from a position of equality. Occluded requirements favour the already favoured.

Crawford Camiciottoli and Querol Julián discuss an ancient and still dominant genre which represents a challenge to all new entrants to the university but especially to L2 users because of its requirement of automaticity at a variety of levels. By highlighting the multimodal nature of lectures, they point out two of the challenges always facing EAP studies: to adapt teaching to developing genres, and to extend our understanding from texts to whole communicative or instructional events.

Like the lectures, textbooks, discussed here by Bondi, belong to a central instructional genre aimed at a large receptive audience. While lectures could be said to exemplify the thought processes of the discipline without its written register, textbooks almost do the opposite. They are problematic for EAP because their rhetorical organization is based on pedagogical principles rather than disciplinary norms. Therefore, they provide models for the disciplinary register (and facilitate learning) but do not model the research discourse that students may be expected to produce.

Spoken academic genres which require student production are challenging for other reasons, including their rather varied nature. This is particularly true of seminar presentations and contributions: as Aguilar shows, it is difficult to know what is expected in another system and difficult to marshal the wide range of skills required to take part. A frequent result is reinforcement of the powerful position of those already privileged by dint of language, nationality or gender. Somehow, marginal participants have to be helped to find ways to position themselves as experts.

The PhD supervision, student production at a higher level and in different circumstances, has hitherto had very little attention. Data are doubly difficult to obtain, in that oral interaction must be painstakingly recorded and transcribed, and in that the genre is not public as interactions may be quite sensitive. Nonetheless, in the environments Björkman was able to record, the interaction was remarkably egalitarian and the power inequalities which obviously present are managed fairly.

The last genre discussed in the section is another oral dialogic interaction, and it could be said to be the last pedagogic genre in a student’s career: the dissertation defence. Unlike supervisions, it is often a public event. Mežek and Swales show that the discourse in two rather different contexts is quite similar, with a collegial atmosphere and frequent laughter alleviating the high-stakes nature of the encounter. Power issues seem more naked lower down the student hierarchy.
Introduction

Research genres

In this section, the genres used in the research process are discussed. A key issue here is that raised by Lillis and Tuck, and also Murañen, Hyyninen and Ranta in Part I, that publication in English and conference participation in English have become necessities for most professional academics. Another is that technological change transforms the possibilities of genres.

On the cusp between research and pedagogic genres, dissertations and theses also count as research genres but they are less dialogic and usually less multimodal. Following an important theme in recent EAP studies, Paul Thompson presents a genre analysis of this high-stakes form and argues that its main contribution is that it provides learners with a conceptual apparatus that is appropriate for understanding their task. That is, rather than subjecting learners to prescriptions, it empowers them to choose appropriately.

Even before they submit their theses, research students will probably have had to produce a text in a less well-described genre: the conference poster. D’Angelo discusses posters and the difficulties they present as a genre which is written but requires or hopes for dialogue. She draws attention to the prospects offered by Digital Interactive Poster Presentations and other adaptations of the genre to the affordances of on-line digital communication. This is another area in which technological changes are changing the possibilities of familiar genres.

The most prestigious research genre in many disciplines is the research article. It is now of great importance not only for established academics but also for doctoral students. Samraj’s chapter deals with the large number of investigations of the move structures of articles in various fields, and with our now quite deep understanding of the devices available for evaluation and expressing identity. She suggests that more study is now needed of the acquisition of these devices.

A challenging research genre for both the analyst and the EAL user is the conference presentation. A complex interplay of spoken language, gesture, displayed text and, often, handouts make presentations highly multimodal, and the presence of a live audience makes them crucially dialogic. Forey and Feng’s chapter shows how SFL theory and the affordances of digital recording and display can produce a model that does justice to this complexity.

Kuteeva’s chapter takes up this theme of EAP genres as moving targets which the teacher must keep an eye on to facilitate students’ entry into their target community. She shows how in many disciplines blogs, tweets and wikis have become essential media within the community, and therefore need to be taken into account in EAP course and task design, particularly since (another repeated theme) some knowledge of related genres will be brought into the academy from everyday experience.

Pedagogic contexts

EAP settings differ from one another not only because polities differ, but also because they are placed in different parts of the educational system. The success of a functional, genre-based view of language use has meant that approaches related to EAP are used quite widely in secondary and tertiary education.

In the middle years of secondary school, children begin to acquire academic discourse in a variety of subjects. Humphrey argues that EAP might contribute to more equal access to education if it could make clearer what is entailed by this and demystify academic language. She shows that steps have been taken towards this goal using the insights of SFL, particularly in Australia, but also that controversy is unavoidable around the extent to which teaching the rules of the game merely strengthens an unfair game.
In US schools, there has been a very large-scale attempt to catalogue the cognitive skills that should be learnt across the curriculum at each level, called the Common Core. Johns’ chapter shows that the intellectual basis of this is of course the skills approach, without particular social grounding or critical ambitions, and unlike in Australia, it has not been based on sophisticated theory. Nevertheless, these standards provide a framework of terms and concepts that allows discussion about literacy within and outside schools.

At undergraduate level, Storch, Morton and Celia Thompson show that there are similar tensions within EAP, although the tyranny of testing is absent. Their case studies exemplify both the limitations of an ‘accommodationist’ skills-based approach and the pitfalls involved in trying to get students to think critically. At the same time, the studies suggest how practical solutions can be found. They also bring up the linkage between our conceptualization of EAP and the extent to which it is marginalized institutionally and forced into the ‘butler’s stance’.

EAP may be most well developed at the level of research students, partly because at this level English has become a necessity across the globe, and because there are very large communities of prestigious EAL users at Anglophone universities. Needs are clear and present but steadily changing and, as Feak shows, genre-based courses have been developed which tackle new issues such as interdisciplinary discourse practices and the increasing need to communicate with non-experts.

Professional academics are a privileged group within their own communities, but, as Belcher, Barron Serrano and Yang point out, EAL users often feel at a disadvantage on a world stage, and in fact often suffer disadvantage comparable in nature if not in scale to minority students at undergraduate level. Their discourse practices may be devalued and they may be excluded from social networks. A broad approach to EAL scholars’ needs is essential, alongside efforts to redress the power differentials in academia.

Managing learning

The final section of the volume examines the practical issues surrounding the delivery of EAP courses. There is a deep linkage between theoretical stances and the practical demands of managing learning, but empirical research is thin on the ground in several areas. A number of these chapters are pioneering surveys of the issues, among which quality control and codes of practice are central.

The units within universities that provide EAP courses or academic writing support differ markedly between states. Gustafsson and Ganobcsik-Williams describe the long-standing traditions that underlie different types of units in the US, and the more recent developments that have led to the institution of writing centres (often bilingual or multilingual) in Europe.

EAP units typically operate under considerable financial and institutional pressure. Gillett’s chapter summarizes the limited research and the experience-based recommendations that are available to guide managers of such units in their practical tasks. The standard recommendations of BALEAP (British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes) play a prominent part, as the association has been among those in the forefront of EAP quality assurance.

EAP teachers have tended to learn by experience and their reading of the research literature. Ding and Campion’s chapter describes criteria and research which could form the basis for more formalized training, and discusses some sample courses. But this is in the context of universities which are increasingly commercial in their outlook, and in which the need for theoretical depth and breadth in EAP teachers is increasingly ignored. There is a risk that cheap quick-fixes erode the progress reported in earlier chapters of this volume.
Effective courses must be based on thorough needs analysis which is informed by an understanding of the discourse practices and ideological perspectives discussed in previous chapters. Bocanegra-Valle’s chapter summarizes this relatively well-researched area and makes a link from needs analysis to quality assurance. Quality teaching is only assured if it is related to effective needs analysis.

The materials and tasks that instantiate EAP in the classroom are clearly what actually leads to success or failure. Stoller’s chapter reviews principles and guidelines for task and material design, discussing how far these items can be authentic and how they can foster fluent use of language to achieve longer-term aims.

Materials and tasks today are of course more often than not computer-based. Yim and Warschauer set digital tools already mentioned, like concordancing and computer-mediated collaboration, in the context of computer-assisted language learning in general. Most strikingly, they emphasize the potential of computer adaptation of text to scaffold skills learning and thus to further learner autonomy.

Because university-level EAP is often seen as remediation and not credit-bearing, it is often not subject to high-stakes assessment. But if it is to be treated with the respect it claims then it must assess its success through student achievement. Weigle and Malone’s chapter concludes the volume by addressing this crucial issue. They discuss the major tests of academic English that already exist, showing the trend towards increasing integration of skills that makes the tests more valid in context, and draw out general features that would be of use to practising teachers designing tests of their own students.

References


This page intentionally left blank