Introduction

Textbooks play a special role in the context of knowledge construction and communication, as they provide access to specialized knowledge and help readers construct a mental representation of specific disciplinary knowledge. Their nature has been variously investigated by discourse analysts (Halliday & Martin 1993; Swales 1990, 1995; Altienza & van Dijk 2011) and historians of science (Kuhn 1970; Bazerman 1988; Klamer 1990). The key role they play in learning contexts – both in secondary (Bezemner & Kress 2008, 2009) and tertiary education (Myers 1992; Swales 1995; Hyland 1999; Richardson 2004; Biber 2006) – has influenced the way they have been described as a genre, as well as their changing fortunes as learning materials in English for Academic Purposes (EAP).

The instructional nature of textbooks makes them particularly useful in scaffolding learning, and the role they play in university instruction in many fields makes them clearly grounded in student reality and therefore typical examples of academic prose encountered by students of EAP. At the same time, their very instructional nature makes their information value usually rather low for university students after the first steps into academic life, while their value as realistic writing models remains almost non-existent. Their importance to novice university students is rather obvious, but their nature seems to determine important limitations for their use.

The chapter starts by looking at the role of disciplinary textbooks as materials for language study and practice, tracing how genre approaches have contributed to giving textbooks a limited but much more specific role as resources for learners and teachers. After focusing on the rhetorical nature of textbooks, influenced by disciplinary and educational discourse alike, the chapter deals with their role in the analysis of academic lexis and phraseology, and raises a few issues related to the notion of language and genre variation. The nature, function and structure of textbooks can indeed be shown to vary across disciplines, cultures and media/modes, based on factors such as the different role of interpretative or empirical methods in the discipline, the different cultural expectations as to the degree of scaffolding or textual interaction in academic materials, or a growing emphasis on the potential of integrated multimodal systems. The final section of the chapter draws implications and recommendations for practice.
Textbooks in the development of EAP

The description of varieties of language has played an increasingly important role in language studies, as well as in language education and in the teaching of languages for specific purposes (LSP). The impact of register studies on the development of ESP and EAP in particular has been highlighted by many (Swales 1985, 1990; Bhatia 1993: 3–12; Calle Martín & Miranda García 2010). In the sixties and seventies, British approaches to register studies focused on varieties associated with specialized subjects, and aimed at identifying the statistically significant lexico-grammatical features of a linguistic variety, while placing great emphasis on the role played by lexical items in identifying a certain register (Barber 1962; Halliday, MacIntosh & Strevens 1964; Crystal & Davy 1969). Accordingly, early work on ESP paid a lot of attention to specialized lexis and grammar, and teaching materials were often based on introductory textbooks, providing students with definitions of the basic terms and examples of language use.

Starting from the seventies, pragmatic approaches to language varieties extended the field to investigating the relationship between grammatical choice and rhetorical function (Selinker, Lackstrom & Trimble 1972, 1973; Trimble 1985; Swales 1985). The first implication of this new focus was the study of the most frequently adopted communicative procedures: definitions, examples, generalizations, etc. Moving beyond an interest in the single speech acts and their realizations, discourse analysis – as outlined for example in Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) – considered the role speech acts play in the whole communicative event, combining the description of linguistic forms with an investigation of the purposes or functions that those forms are designed to serve, of the kind of activity we engage in. Parallel to this shift in descriptive studies was a change in the methodology of teaching languages for specific purposes (LSP); that is, a shift from focus on content to focus on task (Hutchinson & Waters 1987), on study skills and on learning needs rather than just language skills (Dudley-Evans and St John 1998: 24–27). This obviously redefined the role of textbooks in the EAP curriculum, as they remained essential materials for reading purposes, but their role in a writing curriculum changed radically, especially as the study of communicative genres became central to EAP.

The study of genre in its social dimension has dominated recent approaches to language varieties and to EAP in particular. Following Swales’ (1990) seminal work, genres are mainly identified by their communicative purpose, but they are also characterized by the structures that are conventionally adopted by the specialist members of the professional or academic community. The concept of discourse community has proved particularly useful not only in identifying genres themselves, but also in studying the specific features of their variation. A key factor is the role played by the discourse community in identifying the characteristics of “internal” communication (for example, expert-to-expert communication) and “external” communication (for example, communication between expert members of the discourse community and participants who are not quite, or not yet, members of the community). The notion of “apprenticeship” has often been used to describe the process of gaining membership in a discipline, with the “novice” acquiring mastery of what to say, what to do and what to believe in the target discourse through instructional genres.

In this perspective, textbooks not only present a map of the discipline, with its key principles and issues, but also construct their readers, by establishing shared knowledge and accepted argumentative strategies, in line with the apprenticeship function of textbooks (Hyland 1999; Bhatia 2002). When addressing the student-reader (Hyland 2001), textbooks introduce the students to the fundamental notions, the typical beliefs, values and
argumentative strategies of the discipline. Introductory chapters of economics textbooks, for example, are typically devoted to a presentation of the discipline and its methodology (Bondi 1999: 37–69), thus providing a representation of what economists think or should think and introducing the students to disciplinary ways of arguing, specific approaches, theories and positions. Textbooks in general are likely to “contain textual features and conventions of their respective disciplinary communities” (Hyland 1999: 4) – ways of arguing, specific approaches, theories and positions.

In EAP studies, however, the emphasis on genre analysis in the last twenty years or so has raised greater interest in research genres, often downplaying instructional genres. Textbooks, for example, are held to be good at transmitting the “canon”, but not at fostering critical reading (Swales 1990). They seem to conceal the argumentative nature of disciplinary knowledge, by presenting a well-established set of facts and theories. Students are introduced to the basic notions and questions of a discipline, but they are not presented a picture of the multiplicity of positions that characterize scientific debate; neither are they presented with the tools for taking position as to disciplinary issues. Myers (1992), for example, argues that textbooks typically add “factive” certitude to the phenomena being described, by avoiding hedging, by lack of references to the primary literature, by a wide use of simple present and a massive use of cross-references. Almost paradoxically, what makes them easier for students to read “may make it harder for them to deal with other text types they encounter later in a scientific career […] because they get no sense of how facts are established” (Myers 1992: 13).

The pedagogic implications of this have often led applied linguists to point out that textbooks do not provide useful models for the teaching of writing (e.g. Paxton 2007), as they do not seem to teach students how to perform in interactional contexts that may require them to review the literature critically, to support one position in a debate or to present a small-scale independent study. Use of hedging, for example, is usually higher in research genres, as expert readers expect “that their own views will be somehow acknowledged” (Hyland 2000: 93), whereas textbooks often show a tendency to use fewer hedges (Bondi 2002) and more boosters (Hyland 2000). Attribution also plays a minor role in textbooks, as emphasis is on established facts rather than on the sources (Hyland 1999: 15): writers usually make limited use of quotations from relevant literature, while often summarizing debates through forms of generalized attribution (according to one argument…, there is no clear consensus as to…), and highlighting moves like “identifying a problem”, “presenting methodological tools”, “representing debate within the discipline” and “guiding the reader through argument” (Bondi 2005). When students have to produce critical essays or reports, on the other hand, they are expected to pay great attention to both attribution and stance-taking.

Genre approaches to EAP have helped practitioners recognize that textbooks may give students an introduction to the basic notions and lexis of their area of study, but will mostly familiarize students with the rhetorical structures of exposition, without presenting a picture of the multiplicity of positions that characterize scientific debate. They have also helped EAP theory and practice to identify the kinds of tasks that may be required of a student, as well as the different role that each genre can play in the development of a curriculum, in relation not only to specific content but to specific tasks and communicative events. When considered in the light of the range of approaches developed in relation to LSP (cf. Calle Martín & Miranda García 2010), textbooks emerge as providing the kind of scaffolding that may facilitate learning, but certainly not as exhaustive in their potential for exemplifying discourse features and exercising skills.
The nature and structure of textbooks

An analysis of textbooks as a genre can help EAP theory and practice identify the nature and structure of textbooks as communicative events. In an interactional perspective, textbooks clearly show traces of different types of dialogues: they do not only reflect the debates taking place in the scientific community, they also construct an on-going textual dialogue between writers and readers and often also report dialogic interactions in narrative episodes (e.g. when introducing debates or case studies by giving voice to participants) (Bondi 1997). As shown by Swales (1995), textbook writers see themselves as both researchers and teachers, and as teachers they interact with other educators and with the students: the “evaluator reader” and “consumer reader”. Building on this distinction, we can identify different writer/reader roles for the textbook writer: the arguer addressing the partner in argument, the researcher addressing the researcher, the textbook writer addressing the textbook evaluator, the teacher addressing the student and the fellow teacher (Bondi 1998).

Developing students’ awareness of this dialogue (and of the lexico-grammatical features characterizing it) may contribute to making them better and more efficient readers. Obvious signals of writer–reader dialogue are personal pronouns like you or we (Hyland 2002a; Poppi 2004), as well as the use of interrogatives and imperatives (Hyland 2002b; Poppi 2009). In economics textbooks, for example (Bondi 1998), the author often asks questions or makes suggestions addressing the reader directly: you might wonder, you should be able to realize, anyone who understands macroeconomic analysis can realize, etc. All these features presuppose and explicitly mark the presence of a reader, whose attention is captured and selectively focused on key issues or junctures in the writer’s argument. Textbook writers often assign readers a variety of roles in the construction of their own argument, on the basis of an expected argumentative co-operation: readers may be asked to draw inferences, to make objections, at times even to assume a given ideological position, only to be brought to agreement with the writer by successive steps in the argumentative sequence (Bondi 1997).

Writer–reader dialogue, however, is not only realized by formal indicators of an addressee. It is first and foremost realized pragmatically by the coherence that the addressee can establish in the structure of texts. Readers’ expectations as to the structure of a textbook may thus greatly contribute to developing efficient reading and study skills.

Textbooks are often characterized by repetition of schematic structures (Love 1991). The textual structure of economics textbooks, for example, follows highly cyclical expository patterns, where general statements about processes are often either preceded or followed by specific examples: general statement ↔ example. As shown in Bondi (1999: 49), this expository structure might be interpreted both in terms of textual patterns and of didactic moves.

(Example 1)

**How is depreciation calculated?**

Most companies own their own capital goods, but these assets do not last forever. Trucks wear out, computers become obsolete, and buildings eventually begin to deteriorate. The accountant naturally includes an appropriate charge or cost for fixed assets along with all other costs. But just how do we determine how much of an asset is “used up” in a given year?

To account for this decline in the value of fixed assets, accountants depreciate them by using a depreciation formula. There are a number of different formulas, but each follows two major principles: (a) The total amount of depreciation plus salvage value must equal the capital good’s historical cost or purchase price; and (b) the
depreciation is taken in annual accounting charges (even if no money ever leaves the firm) over the asset’s accounting lifetime, which is usually related to the actual economic lifetime of the asset.

We can now understand how depreciation would be charged for Hot Dog Ventures. The equipment is depreciated according to a 10-year lifetime, so that the $150,000 of equipment has a depreciation charge of $15,000 per year. The $100,000 of buildings, carrying a 20-year lifetime, shows an annual depreciation charge of $5000. The total depreciation charge for 1993 is then $20,000.


The subheading in the extract above prepares the main point of the section by identifying the topic. The first paragraph provides the necessary background by giving a preliminary definition of “depreciation”, while acknowledging the reader’s knowledge of depreciation as an essential element of accounting (naturally), but also focusing the reader’s attention on the calculation itself. The second paragraph introduces the most general features of calculating depreciation. The third and final paragraph provides an example illustrating how the calculation can be obtained. The general–specific textual pattern typical of expository texts can be seen operating at different levels, linking for example the first two sentences in the first paragraph or the second and third paragraph. The whole extract, however, can also be seen to reflect teaching sequences, with headline and first paragraph creating the initiation or motivation, followed by the response, or presentation, to be concluded with follow-up or practice.

Textbooks can thus be seen as lying at the intersection of two orders of discourse: educational and disciplinary (Hyland 2000: 107; Bondi 1999: 38). Disciplinary knowledge is constructed through a text that also reflects a teacher–student relationship. Textbooks make ample use of the typical communicative functions of definition and classification: these are common to both disciplinary and educational discourse, but are found more extensively in instructional discourse. Textbooks also reflect the processes of abstraction that characterize disciplinary knowledge, in their distinctive use of grammatical metaphor and nominalization (Halliday & Martin 1993; Coffin 2006). The same processes may also be related to the pedagogic dimension of the genre, as shown for example in the preference for exact simplified quantities in hypothetical moves or analogical explanations (e.g. Assume for simplicity that a country produces only two goods, food and cloth) (Bondi 1999), variously shaping readers’ mental constructs (Poppi 2007). Features that may be directly related to the instructional nature of textbooks are “easyfication” procedures such as rhetorical questions or visual elements (Bhatia 2002: 32–33), and intense use of metadiscourse guiding the reading process (Hyland 2000, 2005, 2009). As shown by Hyland (2009: 120), “[b]y asking (mainly rhetorical) questions, varying their certainty, evaluating ideas, issuing directives, providing definitions and leading readers to particular interpretations, writers massively intervene in these texts to construct themselves as experts and establish a knowledge-transfer perspective of teaching”.

Jones (2005) identifies three ways in which textbooks facilitate readers’ understanding: easyfication, simplification and scaffolding. The first two are adapted from Bhatia’s (1983) work on plain legal language, the third from theories of learning. Easyfication refers to processes of enhancing discourse structure: this may be realized by providing introductory paragraph(s), advance organizers, schematic representations of the text (or text segment), adding annotations/explanations, adding metadiscursive commentaries and questions to encourage interactions with the text. Simplification refers to processes of enhancing
cohesion/coherence: this may be realized by explaining new terms as they arise, restoring cohesive markers of implicit relations, including exemplifications or even just by repeating similar structures. Scaffolding refers to processes of providing domain knowledge: this may be realized by providing activities “which allow students to familiarize themselves with concepts of increasing complexity and to explore these concepts in terms of their reactances and interrelations” (Jones 2005: 746), such as completion or information transfer activities.

The complexity of the organization of the textbook as a whole has been captured in Parodi (2010) by introducing a new macro-level of the analysis: the macro-move. Parodi identifies three rhetorical macro-moves in the genre: “preamble”, “conceptualization and exercising” and “corollary”. Rhetorically speaking, preamble and corollary are satellites of a nucleus provided by the conceptualization and exercising move. The preamble is the opening part of the book, where the writer shows major concern for the audience providing contextualization (in a preface) and presenting content organization, resource organization and a presentation of purpose, audience and thematic nucleus or steps. The conceptualization and exercising macro-move is the central body of the textbook, providing recursive sequences of concept definition–practice–recapitulation moves. The corollary includes solutions and answers to exercises, specifications in annexes and guidelines in indexes and references (Parodi 2010: 205–207). The spiral and recursive structure of the central macro-move leads Parodi to identify a distinctive rhetorical organization called “colony-in-loops” (2010: 217; see also Parodi 2013).

Attention to rhetorical structures has thus highlighted the key role played by definitions and generalizations in textbooks, as well as the importance of organizational units in structuring the textual and interpersonal dimension of extended text. Highlighting the key role of textbooks in educational contexts does not mean ignoring that they also address different professional communities (Orna-Montesinos 2012) and readers with different degrees of expertise. It means seeing them as part of a whole system of genres through which knowledge is disseminated in various contexts.

While they cannot be predominant in the repertoire of academic genres, their essential role as a source of both content and generic literacy cannot be denied. In tertiary education, they are key to the process of acculturating novices into the epistemology of the discipline. In EAP programmes, they are essential material for developing critical reading skills and for building the basis for continuing professional education.

**Corpus-based approaches and critical approaches**

The recent development of corpus-based approaches has contributed greatly to the study of textbooks in EAP. The most important contributions have been in the field of register analysis, as well as in the identification and description of academic vocabulary and phraseology. Textbooks are seen by many as the key sources of exposure to academic language in EAP, and are therefore often seen as more relevant to the identification of language to be taught in learning programmes than research genres like the journal article.

Biber’s work on spoken and written “university language” (Biber 2006) contributes to all these directions. It provides essential reference work for many of those who are interested in identifying “word lists” for academic programmes, that is, the most important words in different domains of academic study (2006: 33–46). It also provides a useful analysis of the typical phraseology of academic discourse and its variation across speech and writing and across disciplines (2006: 133–175). His work also applies multi-dimensional analysis to the corpus, thus allowing comparison of textbooks with other spoken or written academic genres on the basis of sets of language features. Textbooks are shown to be essentially literate
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(vs oral), as they are characterized for example by nominalizations, complex noun-phrase structures and multiple levels of embedding, even if with considerable variation across disciplines (Biber 2006: 177–212). They are also highly focused on content (rather than on procedures), as shown by dense use of technical vocabulary and content words in general. Finally, they are essentially non-narrative (i.e. low in past tenses and reports), and not particularly teacher-centred (low in stance adverbials and nouns) when compared to spoken academic genres.

Attention has long been paid to corpus-based word lists in the EAP context: the best known is the Academic Word List (AWL, Coxhead 2000), a widely used frequency-based list of academic vocabulary. Biber’s TOEFL2000 Spoken and Written Academic Language corpus (T2K-SWAL) has also been used extensively to explore genre and disciplinary variation in both general and specific academic language. Comparative work has typically highlighted spoken–written variation, showing that textbooks, when compared to classroom teaching, tend to use a larger set of different word types with lower frequencies (Biber 2006: 45).

Patterns of vocabulary diversity and distribution frequencies are only one of the aspects studied. An interesting area of exploration – in line with general interest in corpus linguistics – has been the study of phraseological units. “Lexical bundles” and “n-grams” are recurrent word strings identified using frequency and range criteria (Biber, Conrad and Cortes 2004). Work on lexical bundles has produced great attention to phraseological issues in EAP (e.g. Hyland 2008), while also drawing attention to limitations of automatic lists: see, for example, the list of bundles produced by Byrd and Coxhead (2010). With a view to compiling pedagogically useful lists, automatic extraction has been integrated with instructors’ rating (Simpson-Vlach & Ellis 2010) or manual selection (Liu 2012). Special attention has been paid to corpora of textbooks (Wood and Appel 2014; Hsu 2014), on the basis of their centrality in the experience of students and the usefulness of their word lists for other types of academic texts.

Given the wealth of descriptive data available for many academic registers and genres, another interesting area of investigation has been the analysis of EAP teaching materials in comparison with authentic language in use. Along the lines of Hyland’s (1999) comparison of the forms of metadiscourse found in EAP materials and those found in textbooks and research articles, many have studied specific issues or genres. Miller (2011) offers a recent overview, focusing on lexi-co-grammatical differences between university textbooks and English as a second language (ESL) reading texts advertised for their academic content. Similarly, Wood (2010) and Wood and Appel (2014) point at many discrepancies between the nature of academic discourse in use and that of the reading materials proposed in EAP, when looked at from the point of view of multi-word constructions and lexical clusters. While recognizing that students need to be exposed to a range of texts, the key role played by textbooks in the first years of university life suggests greater attention to the language of textbooks at least in reading programmes and vocabulary development syllabi.

Corpus-based techniques have proved particularly useful in exploring disciplinary variation. Biber (2006: 225–227), for example, notices differences in specific features such as diversity of vocabulary, specialized vocabulary, abstract/process nouns, concrete/technical nouns, passive voice and different types of lexical bundles, as well as in some of the dimensions analyzed as sets of features (procedural vs content-focused; narrative vs non-narrative). The humanities and the social sciences, for example, have more diversified vocabulary than business and engineering, but these in turn make greater use of abstract and process nouns; the features of content-focused discourse, on the other hand, are highest in the natural sciences.

Disciplinary variation has also drawn the attention of discourse approaches, and critical approaches in particular. These have addressed both issues of science communication (and
how knowledge is recontextualized for a different audience), and studies on educational discourse (and how discursive structures and strategies can presuppose and reinforce values or widen access to knowledge).

When the epistemology of the disciplines is considered, i.e. the shared views on how knowledge is established, cross-disciplinary variation could be highly influenced by the different role of interpretative or empirical methods across disciplines, sometimes even leading to a continuum between research and instructional genres. Swales (1995: 3) has noticed for example that, if on the whole the textbook is “typically assigned a marginal and controversial place in the academic genre-system”, there are fields such as applied linguistics where textbooks can be shown to counter low research expectations by integrating contemporary research, thus turning out to be hybrid genres “in their efforts to cope with a complex audience configuration, to represent a broad area of available knowledge, to offer a “vision” and to incorporate new findings emerging as a result of the exigencies of textbook writing” (1995: 15).

The humanities and social sciences seem to make the argumentative dimension of textbooks more clearly visible. Focusing on sociology, for example, Love (1993) has shown how a textbook manages to develop the writer’s particular theoretical position. Others have looked at how linguistics textbooks introduce readers to a local grammar of argumentation (Freddi 2005a), in ways that characterize individual stylistic variation (Freddi 2005b). My own work on history (Bondi 2012) has shown that textbook writers are not just recounters (focusing on the narrative of facts), but they also take up the voice of the interpreter (assessing actors and processes), while still giving little prominence to academic argument and alternative views. If research articles understandably pay much more attention to placing one’s own position in the context of a debate, textbooks still show ample traces of the interpretative nature of the discipline and give authors an opportunity to develop their own positions.

Variation, however, may depend on different elements: views on how learning takes place, as well as on how knowledge is established, for instance. Bhatia (2004: 33ff.), for example, looks at textbooks in the fields of economics and law: though sharing the nature of “social sciences”, the two disciplines differ both in instructional strategies and in rhetorical strategies. They attribute different importance to quantitative data and to principles, they show different degrees of interactivity, reflecting “specifically favoured discursive practices, disciplinary methodologies and pedagogic practices considered effective for individual disciplines” (Bhatia 2004: 46). It is also interesting to notice that Parodi’s (2014) cross-disciplinary analysis of textbooks (in Spanish) has shown that the moves showing greatest variation are those that most explicitly involve the didactic component: practising and solving a task. These moves tend to be generally much less frequent in the humanities and the social sciences than in technical and scientific disciplines. This can be interpreted in different ways: the writer may not want to convey an idea of consensus and rather prefer to leave the reader with the task of making up his/her mind (Parodi 2014: 73). This does not only relate to the epistemology of the disciplines, but also to a view of learning (e.g. reflection vs training).

The foundational role of textbooks has, thus, obviously attracted great attention on the part of critical approaches, particularly when dealing with the first levels of education. A major influence has been systemic functional linguistics and the Sydney School in particular, with its projects developing awareness of generic structures in schools. As shown, for example, in Rose and Martin (2012), the history of the Sydney School’s pedagogy is extremely rich and advocates a critical perspective to literacy education. Awareness of an unequal distribution of knowledge in society is often at the basis of educational projects that aim at making knowledge more accessible. The impact of this kind of work often involves analyzing textbooks (e.g. Coffin 2006), and developing teachers’ and students’ awareness of the meaning structures
underlying textbooks: see, for example, work carried out by Achugar and Schleppegrell (2005) – highlighting the need to develop awareness of implicit and explicit causal meanings – and Schleppegrell and de Oliveira (2006) – showing the need to integrate content and language in teaching and learning. Critical discourse analysis (e.g. Altienza and van Dijk 2011) has paid particular attention to the ways in which textbooks manifest underlying ideologies or hidden curricula.

From the point of view of EAP, and the growing community of students facing tertiary education in non-native English, another interesting perspective that needs to be further explored is that of cross-cultural and intercultural analysis. Student expectations as to the degree of scaffolding or textual interaction in academic materials may vary depending on the different national (or supra-/international) academic communities. The critical skills of students may also vary, depending on their awareness of generic structures and of the ways in which epistemological and ideological issues are manifested (or presupposed) in discourse.

Finally, another perspective that cannot be ignored is that of multimodality. The role of visual elements in learning materials has not just changed quantitatively but also qualitatively over the past few decades: images have moved away from being mere illustrations toward becoming the element that centrally shows a great part of the material to be taught (Kress 2010: 47). Layout has also become a central element of meaning creation and reader’s scaffolding, with the arrangement of elements on the page equally involving text and image in the process of semiotic production (2010: 143). The principles of composition and design also influence the patterns of reader participation and are meant to favour understanding and acquisition of concepts, which turns them into potentially useful tools for the learning of academic language.

Recommendations for practice and future directions

Academic textbooks may have changed their role in EAP programmes, but they have certainly profited from the development of descriptive studies aimed at the identification of their rhetorical organization and generic structures. The study of textbooks as a genre has explored the peculiar ways in which they build their expository sequences, while still manifesting the writer’s position. Genre analysis (often combined with corpus tools) has also dealt extensively with language features manifesting intertextuality (citations and reference to sources), writer identity (personal references and evaluative features) and forms of reader-guidance (metadiscourse and interpersonal features). Corpus-informed studies have been extremely influential in compiling lists of words, phraseological patterns and lexico-grammatical features characterizing textbooks and other genres of academic discourse.

Textbooks may not provide a good basis for a writing syllabus, as the moves and the kind of “authorial voice” that characterizes textbooks only provide a limited view of discourse when compared to the language needs of students in EAP. Definitions, generalizations and exemplifications are important, but certainly not comprehensive of what a student must be able to do with language. Furthermore, the expository voice of the textbook writer does not provide an adequate model for the more argumentative forms of discourse that are required of students as they go on in their studies. The moves and the lexico-grammar of textbooks, however, certainly play a major role in the development of reading skills and in the building-up of the first academic vocabulary.

Studies on lexis and phraseology have also contributed to greater awareness among EAP practitioners of the importance of developing a lexical syllabus and understanding the value of a lexical approach. Syllabus design can now count on more accurate analysis of the moves and steps that characterize textbooks and on the description of their lexico-grammar, as well
as on more accurate definitions of the potential use of textbook materials in EAP, with its important role in building up the basis of a lexico-grammar, the key role in the first years of reading skills and the obvious limits in the development of writing skills.

Work on textbooks has been wide-ranging in the description of their structures, and the way they vary across disciplines and match (or mismatch) teaching materials. Other areas have been explored less extensively and point to directions for further research. The impact of new forms of communication in the contemporary world suggests the need to explore new forms of intertextuality; for example, looking at how textbooks are integrated in a network of genres and are complemented, for example, by companion websites comprising forms of research writing, blogs, interactive tasks, videos, fora etc. Looking at textbooks as only one of the genres constituting the process of learning at tertiary level suggests looking at how the different media and genres can contribute to what is ultimately the aim of the whole system: knowledge construction and communication. There is a need to explore the cognitive implications of different strategies adopted, considering the issue of reconceptualization, and looking at the spectrum of genres with a view to the process of knowledge communication in the context of tertiary education.

Further reading

Biber (2006); Hyland (1999); Jones (2005); Parodi (2010); Swales (1995)

Related chapters

3 Academic literacies
6 EAP, EMI or CLIL?
10 Academic reading into writing
14 Acquiring academic and disciplinary vocabulary
15 Systemic functional linguistics and EAP
16 Corpus studies in EAP
19 Genre analysis
21 Intercultural rhetoric
22 Critical perspectives
24 Lectures
31 Research articles
42 Needs analysis for curriculum design

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