Materials and associated tasks are fundamental to teaching and learning English for academic purposes (EAP). Materials, often depicted as “anything” used to facilitate learning (Tomlinson, 2013), include EAP textbooks, commercial materials that are not part of EAP-textbook packages, excerpts from introductory university textbooks, teacher-created worksheets, video recordings, online sites (including technology, entertainment, and design talks (TEDs)), and computer-assisted language learning programs. Inextricably linked to these materials are the tasks associated with them that students engage in to process materials, learn from them, and attain course objectives. In EAP contexts, materials and tasks work in concert to prepare students for future academic pursuits.

A defining characteristic of effective EAP materials and tasks is that they are informed by the needs of students who aspire to study (or who are simultaneously studying) in English. Needs analyses have revealed large skill sets required by EAP students. That students need vocabulary (and lots of it), improved language skills, and grammar is assumed; thus, EAP materials and tasks often centre on these language areas. But EAP students’ needs extend well beyond language; thus, EAP materials and tasks should also guide students in:

- engaging in academic-task sequences;
- using strategies in meaningful combinations to overcome challenges and achieve goals;
- comprehending and producing the spoken and written genres that students will encounter;
- developing study skills;
- strengthening critical thinking abilities;
- using technology for academic purposes;
- developing test-taking strategies for test types that will be encountered (Kurgat, 2008), including tests that serve as gatekeepers for entry into regular classes (e.g., the Cambridge English suite of exams; Common European Framework of Reference for Languages [CEFR]; International English Language Testing System [IELTS]; PTE [Pearson Test of English] Academic; Test of English as a Foreign Language [TOEFL]; country-specific exams such as the South African National Benchmark Tests; language-program placement and exit exams).

Equally important are materials and tasks that prepare students for the underlying expectations of the academy. EAP students may be unaware of the limited role that
memorization plays in most English-medium academic contexts, the importance of attribution and related conventions, or the grave consequences that can result from plagiarism. Furthermore, because EAP teachers cannot predict exactly what students will encounter in their futures (Johns, 1997, 2007), EAP materials and tasks should provide students with analytic tools that will stand the test of time and assist students in navigating future studies independently (Alexander, Argent, and Spencer, 2008; Lynch, 2001).

As revealed by this partial itemization of EAP student needs, EAP preparation is accompanied by ambitious goals, often within formidable time constraints. Thus, a great deal needs to be accomplished in a relatively short time period to prepare EAP students for future studies. Materials and tasks serve as vehicles through which EAP students can make the gains needed to successfully transition into English-medium classes.

Perspectives on varied EAP contexts

EAP materials and tasks vary across locations (e.g., English-medium institutions in Asia and Europe; educational institutions in English-speaking countries), target students with EAP needs (e.g., international students, Generation 1.5 students, language-minority students), instructional foci (e.g., discrete, integrated, and/or study skills), and students’ entry-level language proficiencies and academic preparedness. Tertiary-level students often enrol in EAP courses before embarking on their undergraduate or graduate studies. Students who require years of academic English preparation often begin underprepared, with little, if any, experience engaging in conventional academic tasks (including extensive reading). More prepared EAP students may be just one or two semesters away from entering regular classes; others may take EAP support classes while concurrently enrolled in regular English-medium courses. Also dedicated to EAP instruction are English-medium K–12 international schools (Scholz, 2012) and secondary schools with culturally and linguistically diverse students in English as a first language contexts (Johns and Snow, 2006). In these varied EAP settings, students’ needs are pressing and stakes are high. It is through materials and tasks that EAP teachers help students become “academic insiders” (Alexander, Argent, and Spencer, 20088, p.9), who are prepared for the language, texts, tasks, and expectations of the academy.

Critical issues and topics

The literature on materials and tasks in English language teaching (e.g., Harwood, 2010; McDonough, Shaw, and Masuhara, 2013; McGrath, 2013; Miskan and Chambers, 2010; Tomlinson, 2012; Tomlinson and Masuhara, 2010; Van den Branden, 2006; Willis and Willis, 2007), and EAP more specifically (e.g., Alexander et al., 2008; de Chazal, 2014; Hyland, 2006), raises critical issues of relevance to EAP. The issues fall into numerous broad areas, including authenticity, selection and development of materials and tasks, relationships between materials and tasks, vocabulary, and student engagement.

Authenticity

The role of authenticity in materials and tasks has permeated EAP discussions for decades (Alexander, Argent, and Spencer, 2008; de Chazal, 2014; Gilmore, 2007; Jordan, 1997; Widdowson, 2000). The adoption of authentic materials (i.e., materials not created specifically for language-learning purposes) for EAP instruction is advocated by some because it is believed that authentic materials provide the most expedient way to prepare EAP students
EAP materials and tasks

for regular-class demands. Some EAP professionals support the use of authentic materials “as early as possible” because EAP students discover not only academic conventions through encounters with authentic texts but also the difficulties that will be faced and the strategies that will be needed to overcome them (Alexander, Argent, and Spencer, 2008).

Authenticity, however, is not a straightforward concept. A popular science article (written for the layperson) is distinct from an article written for experts (e.g., in chemistry) on the same topic, yet both texts are authentic. Similarly, authentic materials written for middle or high school students could be appropriate for older EAP students (Fitzsimmons-Doolan et al., 2012). The sustained content of such texts (i.e., popular science articles and middle school texts) might approximate the academic experience that EAP students will encounter in regular classes.

As appealing as authentic materials may be for EAP preparation, they are oftentimes too challenging, thus, inaccessible, frustrating, and demotivating for EAP students, especially those with low proficiencies and minimal academic preparedness. In place of authentic materials, EAP professionals often turn to adapted materials in commercial EAP textbooks or materials that they adapt themselves, the latter resulting from various processes (Table 43.1).

Some professionals claim that adapted materials overprotect students, distort language, and deprive learners of opportunities to prepare for the realities of academia (Bocanegra-Valle, 2010). Others argue that authenticity is conveyed not by sources of materials but rather by the authenticity of learning purpose; from this alternative perspective, texts that best help students achieve pedagogical aims are considered most authentic in that instructional context (e.g., Widdowson, 2000). Despite claims and counterarguments, most methodologists and materials developers believe that adapted materials have an important place in EAP contexts where students would only be frustrated by authentic materials. In EAP programs that offer a sequence of courses, early courses can be structured around adapted materials, while more advanced courses can use materials that are closer approximations of academic texts.

Linked to discussions of authentic materials are those focused on authenticity of task, task sequences, and task purposes (Alexander, Argent, and Spencer, 2008; de Chazal, 2014; Hyland, 2003, 2006). Willis and Willis (2007) depict authentic tasks as those that focus

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**Table 43.1 Materials adaptation processes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adaptation processes</th>
<th>Sample outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjustments</td>
<td>Preserved rhetorical purpose without the burden of challenging vocabulary or content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversions</td>
<td>Reading passages converted into listening texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expansions</td>
<td>Added redundancy, concrete examples, background information, key-term definitions, signals of organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortening and reordering</td>
<td>Altered length or sequencing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simplifications</td>
<td>Modified content, grammar, lexicon, textual density</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplementation</td>
<td>Additional texts with accessible content</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note**

Adapted from Alexander et al., 2008; Bocanegra-Valle, 2010; Tomlinson, 2011, 2013; Tomlinson and Masuhara, 2004
on meaning and tangible outcomes. What is typically seen in EAP classrooms, however, is a combination of authentic and pedagogic tasks, the latter designed to assist students in improving their language, content learning, and study skills (Waters and Waters, 2001), in addition to helping them access materials that might be challenging for them, whether they are authentic or not. Pedagogic tasks can be designed to approximate the tasks (and their purposes) that students will encounter in academic contexts.

**Selection and development**

Whether EAP teachers use authentic materials, adapted materials, or a combination of the two, the issues of materials selection and development remain. EAP materials often stem from commercial EAP textbooks, yet, even in such settings, EAP practitioners often bring additional materials into class (from magazines, newspapers, academic journals, introductory academic-textbook chapters, or YouTube) to meet students’ needs. When seeking supplementary materials, EAP practitioners face the challenge of locating materials that build upon textbook content, lend themselves to academic tasks, and complement students’ needs, proficiency levels, and interests. Further considerations involve topic, genre, audience, register, rhetorical function, organization, and purpose.

Related to these issues are discussions of “where to begin” for the selection and development of EAP materials and tasks. Starting points could entail the identification of interesting content; specifications of target tasks, texts, genres, and vocabulary; or use of corpus-research findings. The Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) association (www.tblt.org/) promotes the task as the “central unit for defining language learning needs, determining curriculum goals, designing [language classroom] activity, and assessing language competencies.” Mishan (2005), similarly, advocates working within a framework of task authenticity, which permits “rehearsal for real-world situations” (p.70). Alexander, Argent, and Spencer (2008), however, emphasize the difficulties of using tasks as starting points “because it is not clear what makes one task more difficult than another and, hence, how they might be sequenced developmentally in terms of language” (p.93); they suggest that “genres and rhetorical functions provide a better starting point to allow for progression, recycling, and transferability” (p.93).

**Relationship between materials and tasks**

EAP materials and tasks should work in tandem. Materials without accompanying tasks are not particularly effective in preparing students for the demands of academia; similarly, stand-alone tasks, detached from materials, do not prepare students for the realities of academia where tasks are typically connected to written and aural materials. Tomlinson (2013) mentions the value of combining authentic texts (i.e., materials) with pedagogic tasks to raise students’ awareness about language, and provide practice opportunities. Alexander, Argent, and Spencer (2008) advocate the opposite when they claim that authenticity of task can be allowed to override authenticity of content (or text).

EAP textbooks typically include pedagogic tasks, in the form of exercises and activities. Such tasks might be designed to build and recycle vocabulary, assess comprehension, provide strategy training, increase fluency, integrate skills, and guide students in the application of content for speaking or writing purposes (when, e.g., preparing oral presentations, participating in group discussions, writing summaries). Tasks that are integral to EAP textbooks are sometimes approximations of authentic tasks (e.g., choosing a topic related to
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core materials, researching it, and writing a paper; taking notes and using them for authentic academic purposes).

EAP materials and tasks are often scaffolded as a way to offer students support (Hyland, 2006). Mishan (2005) makes reference to “task approximating” (p.81) as a form of scaffolding. Through carefully constructed task sequences, students gradually move toward being able to handle more challenging texts and tasks independently. With time, increasingly long, conceptually more complex texts and tasks replace easier versions, assisting students in making progress toward EAP course goals. By means of scaffolding, a built-in progression of materials and tasks becomes integral to EAP instruction.

For materials that are not accompanied by tasks, which would be the case with most authentic materials, EAP teachers typically create accompanying tasks to achieve EAP course goals. They might design tasks to give students access to the materials, model strategies, improve skills, build vocabulary, guide students in discovering helpful language features, and/or engage students in task sequences that approximate the academic process (e.g., listen to a lecture and take notes, read a related passage while noting main ideas in the margins, search the web for other related texts, use readings and lecture notes to write a synthesis).

Relationships between materials and tasks are complicated by the fact that materials and tasks are not always easily distinguishable. For example, “reading guides” (developed as course materials and distributed to students as hand-outs) can be used as part of an elaborated task sequence that engages students in purposeful reading to promote comprehension, raise students’ text structure awareness, and model effective reading strategies. Thus, in some instances, materials and tasks are one and the same.

Vocabulary

That vocabulary is essential for EAP students and key to their academic success is indisputable (Nation, 2013). Thus, a commitment to EAP students’ vocabulary growth and, equally important, their guided use of vocabulary-learning strategies for autonomous vocabulary building is important for EAP curricula. Together, materials and tasks serve as excellent tools for (a) introducing students to academic vocabulary in context; (b) providing students with the multiple encounters needed to consolidate vocabulary learning; and (c) giving students opportunities to explore and engage actively with pertinent vocabulary.

Academic vocabulary is oftentimes depicted as the lexical items that occur across academic disciplines and that are uncommon in non-academic texts (Nation, 2013). Corpus analyses have led to the identification of academic vocabulary and the creation of academic word lists, including the Academic Word List (AWL, Coxhead, 2000; cf. Gardner, 2013; Hyland and Tse, 2007) and the Academic Vocabulary List (AVL, Davies and Gardner (n.d.), see www.academicvocabulary.info/). To date, the AWL has guided numerous EAP textbook projects (e.g., Schmitt and Schmitt, 2005). The Compleat Lexical Tutor (www.lextutor.ca), a versatile online tool that makes use of the AWL, is used by developers of EAP materials and tasks to assess the lexical difficulty of texts (and much more). A similar online tool can be accessed from the AVL homepage, noted above.

Vocabulary researchers, especially those interested in vocabulary size and frequencies (e.g., Gardner, 2013; Nation, 2013), agree that there is simply too much academic vocabulary to teach. Thus, designers of EAP materials and tasks must recognize the value of incidental vocabulary learning, and the all-important reciprocal relationship between reading and academic vocabulary knowledge (Gardner, 2013).
Student engagement

Materials and tasks that complement students’ immediate and future needs can contribute to students’ affective and cognitive engagement (Tomlinson, 2013), and motivate students to improve their language abilities, critical-thinking skills, and content learning (Alexander, Argent, and Spencer, 2008). Active student engagement in the academic process, critical for EAP learners’ futures as well, entails, at a minimum, information gathering (from written and aural sources), information processing (including decisions about what is and is not pertinent for particular assignments), and information reporting in written and oral forms (Stoller, 2006).

Current contributions

That materials and tasks are central to language teaching, in general, and EAP, more specifically, is indicated not only by the works cited above but also by numerous professional associations (all accessible on the web) focused on language learning materials and tasks: (a) the Materials Development Association; (b) TESOL’s Materials Writers Interest Section; (c) the International Consortium on Task-Based Language Teaching; and (d) the Japanese Association of Language Teachers Special Interest Group on Task-based Learning. Other contributions to current interests in EAP materials and tasks centre on inventories of academic tasks and findings from corpus- and genre-based analyses.

Inventories of academic tasks

Particularly helpful to EAP task design are research-based inventories of academic tasks. Hafernick and Wiant’s (2012) inventory of formal, semi-formal, and informal academic tasks, organized by predominant skill area, serves as an excellent resource for designers of EAP materials and tasks. In the area of speaking, for instance, Hafernick and Wiant identify formal tasks (e.g., presentations, speeches, discussion-leader responsibilities), semi-formal tasks (e.g., class participation and small-group discussions), and informal tasks (e.g., face-to-face interactions with peers and instructors). They introduce parallel inventories for academic listening, reading, and writing. Adding to the value of their academic-task inventories is the identification of the other language skills involved in each predominant skill area.

Equally important for EAP task design are the efforts of de Chazal (2014), who itemizes common tasks associated with:

- critical thinking (e.g., comparing, contrasting, identifying and evaluating supporting evidence, identifying author stance);
- reading for academic purposes (e.g., establishing purposes for reading, matching reading approach to purpose, identifying main and supporting arguments);
- academic writing at pre-, during-, and post-writing stages (e.g., reading and analysing the assignment, gathering pertinent information, drafting, critically reading what has been written and rewriting as necessary);
- academic listening (e.g., listening and note taking, listening to highly rehearsed and spontaneous content, processing content of lectures and relating it to content from other sources);
- academic speaking (e.g., formulating and expressing arguments, responding to and building on others’ comments, asking pertinent questions that arise from others’ contributions).
de Chazal also itemizes the multimodal dimensions of contemporary lectures, which EAP materials writers and task designers can simulate to prepare students for today’s realities. (For other EAP task inventories, see Alexander, Argent, and Spencer, 2008; McCarter and Jakes, 2009.)

**Findings from corpus and genre analyses**

Findings from corpus- and genre-based analyses have made important contributions to our understanding of spoken and written academic language (e.g., Biber, 2006; Biber and Gray, 2010; Hyland, 2004, 2006; Nesi and Gardner, 2012; Paltridge, 2006; Swales, 1990, 2004) and to EAP material and task design (e.g., Bunting, Diniz, and Reppen, 2013; Feak and Swales, 2014; McCarthy and O’Dell, 2008; Reppen, 2010; Swales and Feak, 2012; Timmis, 2013; Tribble, 2010; Walsh, 2010; Zwier, 2009). The large databases (i.e., corpora) of academic language created by corpus linguists have made possible analyses that offer insights into language use that are relevant for both EAP students and designers of EAP materials and tasks (Hyland, 2013). (See Nesi, this volume, for more on corpora.) Genre-based analyses, too, have contributed insights into the characteristics of academic texts, including the linguistic and organizational patterns that exist across texts, and sections within them.

The public availability of online corpora makes EAP teacher and student use feasible (Hyland, 2013; see also Yim and Warschauer, this volume, for more on EAP student use of corpora as learning resources). Reppen (2010) provides guidelines for using existing online corpora (and teacher-created corpora) for materials development and task design. Similarly, genre-analysis tasks, advocated by Hyland (2004), Johns (2007), Paltridge (2001), Stoller and Robinson (2015), and Swales and Feak (2012) showcase the value of raising students’ awareness of the linguistic and non-linguistic features of the genres that they need to comprehend and produce (Alexander, Argent, and Spencer, 2008; Tardy, 2009).

**Recommendations for practice**

When it comes to EAP materials and tasks, there is no one-size-fits-all (Hyland, 2006). Yet, what all EAP contexts have in common is the goal to prepare students for study in English-medium classrooms. With this overarching goal in mind, a number of recommendations for practice can be made that are applicable, with adaptation, to most EAP contexts.

**Make use of coherent sets of content materials**

An effective way to devise tasks that mirror those that EAP students will encounter in regular classes is to make use of coherent sets of content materials (Alexander, Argent, and Spencer, 2008). Coherence can be achieved by adopting multiple content sources that share a common theme, but that add new perspectives, opposing viewpoints, culture- or discipline-specific examples, elaborated explanations, and/or successive studies. The sustained content that results from the use of multiple content sources (e.g., mainstream course textbook sections, journal articles, popularizations, videotaped lectures, websites, charts, and graphs) permits EAP students to engage in systematic progressions of tasks that integrate skills (reading to write, reading to prepare for oral presentations) and lead to higher-level thinking (e.g., syntheses, comparisons, contrasts, analyses). Academic-task sequences that students are unfamiliar with can be staged, with more teacher support initially and more independent student work later. Stand-alone materials—with no connections to one another—simply do not lend themselves...
to such purposeful academic tasks (or training). An added benefit of coherent sets of materials is the natural recycling of key vocabulary that occurs. A commitment to vocabulary building, vocabulary-learning strategies, and vocabulary recycling (Gardner, 2013; Nation, 2013; Schmitt, 2000) is more easily achieved with coherent sets of materials and related tasks.

Compiling sets of coherent materials can be achieved in numerous ways. Some EAP textbooks are organized around units comprising more than one content source (e.g., two reading passages, one lecture, a web link); if those units have been compiled with coherence in mind, the EAP teacher has a ready-made set of content materials that can be tied to tasks such as those described above. Yet not all EAP textbooks are organized in this way and they oftentimes need supplementation so that meaningful academic tasks can be devised.

In settings where EAP textbooks are not adopted, there remains a need for coherent sets of materials. Some EAP teachers achieve this by adopting (or adapting) introductory mainstream-course textbook materials, linked naturally by the theme of the course. More common, however, is the need to supplement authentic or adapted materials selected for instruction, thereby creating a “thematic unit” with tasks that require, for example, critical thinking, meaningful review, and the exploration of connections across texts, thereby mirroring common academic practices.

**Devise pre–during–post tasks around EAP materials**

When EAP instructional units are structured around pre, during, and post stages, many EAP goals can be achieved. Pre, during, and post tasks, centred around content materials, can introduce students to useful stage-specific strategies, guide students in accessing and making use of content materials purposefully, and provide students with practice that over time translates into independent use of common academic practices. Each stage serves distinct purposes, thus each will be accompanied by its own set of tasks, oftentimes with the same materials being used across them. Table 43.2 itemizes goals for pre, during, and post segments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>During</th>
<th>Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>Establish purpose for reading</td>
<td>Guide reading to facilitate comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tap prior knowledge</td>
<td>Help students construct meaning and monitor comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide information needed for comprehension (e.g., vocabulary, background)</td>
<td>Connect what is read with what is known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explore text organization</td>
<td>Revisit predictions and revise, when needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Set up expectations (e.g., make predictions)</td>
<td>Evaluate what is being read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stimulate interest</td>
<td>Engage in ongoing summarization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Build confidence and motivation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 43.2 Sample goals for pre–during–post stages of EAP classes focused on reading-skills development

**Note**

a Adapted from Grabe and Stoller (2011)
of lessons centred on reading (Grabe and Stoller, 2011; Hedgcock and Ferris, 2009); parallels certainly exist for instruction in other skills.

EAP textbooks, adopted as primary EAP course materials, often include pre and post tasks, though students often complete them without understanding their purposes or relevance to future studies. During-stage tasks are often absent or poorly developed. EAP teachers can supplement course materials with during-stage tasks to enrich students’ academic preparation, and introduce them to strategies that could have immense value in their futures.

**Devise tasks that require students to revisit materials purposefully**

EAP students are not accustomed to revisiting course materials for well-defined purposes. Yet that is exactly what they will need to do in future classes to make sense of the dense, lengthy, and challenging texts that they are assigned to read; study for exams; draft papers; plan oral presentations; and contribute to study-group discussions. EAP students benefit from tasks that oblige them to revisit materials for authentic, explicitly stated purposes such as these (from Stoller, 2002):

- confirming and clarifying understanding;
- evaluating information;
- exploring relationships among different ideas, chapters, and other information sources;
- finding contradictions;
- personalizing information;
- reviewing for a quiz;
- searching for details;
- sharing information;
- synthesizing information from varied sources.

An added benefit that results from what we might call “revisiting tasks,” especially in the case of rereading, is that they help students develop their reading fluency.

**Make use of model texts**

The written and aural materials that are integrated into EAP instruction can serve numerous purposes, including training students in targeted skills (e.g., reading and listening) and providing models of text types that may be encountered in regular classes. EAP students benefit from becoming familiar with the linguistic, non-linguistic, and organizational features of these genres so that they can better comprehend and produce them (Hyland, 2004; Johns, 1997; Tardy, 2009; Wingate, 2012). EAP teachers can guide students in discovering genre features by means of numerous genre-analysis tasks, involving text previewing, critical reading and listening, scrambled paragraphs, the explicit teaching of signal words, and the use of graphic organizers (discussed below).

One instructional approach that combines the consideration of target-genre models (entire texts, full sections, excerpts, and textual elements, such as figures and tables) with their analyses is the iterative read-analyse and write approach advocated by Stoller and Robinson (2015; see also Tardy and Courtney, 2008). With this approach, students are guided in their analyses by focusing on audience and purpose, organization, conventions (particular to the genre), grammar and mechanics (that run across genres), and mode of presentation (e.g., prose or graphics). By analysing genres across these dimensions, students learn to identify
and appreciate the various features that must coalesce to meet academic, and possibly disciplinary, expectations. Instructionally, this approach represents a manageable way to break down larger analytic tasks into smaller, more achievable goals. Table 43.3 expands upon these areas in the context of classes that focus on analysing written texts.

After reading and analysing examples of the target genre (and its parts), students begin to write using excerpts as models. While writing, students return to the sample texts for additional rounds of reading and analyses, to check, verify, or seek further insights into the genre that they are trying to emulate. By means of this iterative cycle—accompanied by explicit instruction, discussion, practice, and feedback—students develop the skills needed for access to and control of the genres that will be important for them (Tardy, 2009). Similar steps could be taken with models of other genres (in some cases videotaped) that students will need to produce, including oral presentations, PowerPoint presentations (with or without accompanying hand-outs), and group discussions.

**Use graphic organizers to raise EAP students’ awareness of discourse organization**

Tasks involving the use of graphic organizers (Jiang, 2012; Jiang and Grabe, 2007, 2009) contribute to EAP students’ awareness of discourse organization. Graphic organizers (i.e., visual displays such as timelines, sequence charts) help students recognize recurring patterns and their variations in written and spoken materials. Students’ active engagement in filling in graphic organizers with information from the materials being used in class, such as definition-of-term frames (Figure 43.1) or sequence charts (Figure 43.2), not only raises students’ awareness of common discourse patterns but it also promotes comprehension. Completed graphic organizers can be used to transition students from reading to writing tasks, minimizing instances of plagiarism.
EAP materials and tasks

Devote time to fluency tasks

EAP students do not often realize, before enrolling in regular classes, how their lack of fluency (in reading, writing, and/or speaking) can impact their academic performance. Students are typically surprised to learn how much they will have to read in regular classes and how accountable they will need to be for textual information. They do not recognize how limited reading fluency might negatively impact their reading comprehension, ability to complete reading assignments, and chances for academic success. Similarly, they do not comprehend how much time will be needed to complete written assignments in and out of class; and, for those who lack fluency in speaking, they may not grasp how it will hamper their ability to communicate with classmates and instructors.

EAP tasks targeting fluency development are worthwhile. Reading fluency tasks, for instance, are rarely standard EAP textbook features. Such tasks can be devised around the materials that students are assigned to read (Grabe and Stoller, 2011). One of the most efficient ways to promote reading fluency is by asking students to reread materials for different, explicitly defined, purposes. Parallel tasks could be devised for writing and speaking fluency development.

Engage EAP students in elaborated tasks with tangible academic outcomes

One way to engage EAP students in the academic process is through elaborated tasks and projects (Beckett and Miller, 2006). When project-related materials and tasks are geared toward students’ EAP needs, students engage in relevant sequences of tasks (e.g., information gathering, processing, and reporting). Through such tasks, students’ language and content learning improve in addition to their self-confidence, motivation, and engagement (Stoller, 2006). The importance placed on tangible outcomes (e.g., multimedia presentations, posters, PowerPoint presentations, written reports) permits students to set achievable goals, track their progress, and assess the results of their work. When outcomes are prepared with real audiences in mind, a degree of authenticity is added to the projects, unlike so many language-classroom activities.
Future directions

Ongoing needs analyses

EAP professionals and students benefit from ongoing commitments to needs analyses, locally and in broader EAP contexts. The results of recent needs analyses are useful, but they cannot be seen as fixed depictions of EAP student needs, which evolve with changes in classroom delivery, assignment types, the demands of technology, and EAP student populations. It used to be, for example, that lectures were given in teacher-fronted modes. The talking-head videos that accompanied published EAP textbooks in the past were not particularly effective, and now they are terribly dated. Today’s lectures are often supplemented with PowerPoint slides, video streams, and hand-outs. Materials and tasks need to be developed that reflect current academic practices. A decade ago, web-based learning management systems (LMSs) were not standard components of university instruction, but they are in many settings now. LMSs offer virtual tools for (a) delivering, managing, and supporting classroom instruction; (b) posting written documents and videos for easy student access; (c) viewing students’ work and providing online feedback; (d) encouraging online “discussions” among students; and much more. Linking EAP classes to LMSs, to model the realities of regular classrooms, is the ideal. If that is not possible, creating tasks that simulate the demands of LMSs is beneficial. Because of such changes, ongoing needs analyses are critical; those who conduct them should share results with professionals in the field so that everyone can keep track of EAP students’ evolving needs.

New technologies in EAP materials and tasks

Similarly, the use of technology in EAP materials and tasks should keep up with the realities of academia. EAP students benefit from learning to communicate electronically in ways that are academically appropriate, and to use technology for common academic tasks (e.g., accessing and submitting course materials on LMSs, using electronic library databases, communicating with instructors and classmates through e-mail, crafting and giving effective PowerPoint presentations, consulting online collocation dictionaries, and conducting Internet searches). EAP practitioners should align materials and tasks, to the best of their abilities, to the new realities of technology that is used for academic purposes (Kiddle, 2013). The incorporation of technologies into EAP instruction—including concordancers, online corpora, smart phones, digital audio and video, podcasts, weblogs, wikis, web quests, discussion boards, massive open online courses (MOOCs), TEDs, YouTube—adds relevance to students’ EAP preparation (Alexander, Argent, and Spencer, 2008; Walker, 2014). Blended EAP course delivery (Mishan, 2013), through a combination of more traditional and electronic materials and tasks, has also recently become a reality. Adding to the mix are open educational resources (OER)—freely accessible, openly licensed digitized documents and media in the public domain—that can be considered for EAP teaching, learning, and assessment (Blyth, 2014).

A call for more empirical research

At present, we have an incomplete understanding of EAP teaching materials and related tasks because of the limited research on their actual use by teachers and learners, their effect on students’ learning, and their influence on classroom discourse, among other areas (Garton and Graves, 2014; Tarone, 2014; cf. Guerrettaz and Johnston, 2014; Harwood,
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2014; Tomlinson and Masuhara, 2010). The field would benefit greatly from less anecdotal reporting on EAP materials and tasks, and more systematic research that controls for other variables influencing language learning (see Garton and Graves, 2014, who propose various research agendas).

Further reading

Alexander, Argent, & Spencer (2008); de Chazal (2014); Tomlinson (2013); Tomlinson & Masuhara (2010)

Related chapters

2 General and specific EAP
23 Undergraduate assignments and essay exams
25 Textbooks
36 EAP pedagogy in undergraduate contexts
42 Needs analysis for curriculum design

References


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