

Reviews

ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES: AN ADVANCED RESOURCE BOOK

Ken Hyland

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(by María Isabel Herrando Rodrigo. University of Zaragoza)

herrando@unizar.es

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As is well known, the Routledge *Applied Linguistics* series is designed as a comprehensive guide. The pedagogic structure of each book ensures the readers the opportunity to think and reflect while he or she is introduced to key concepts and appropriate skills of a theme or discipline. This volume has been designed as an introductory university manual for graduate students and English teachers who are working in the field of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) for the first time. Hyland introduces this resource book with a summary of the beginnings and the state-of-the-art of this independent discipline worthy of academic research. He claims in this work that English for Academic Purposes has evolved rapidly over the last twenty years from a branch of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in the 80's. The term EAP apparently coined by Tim Johns in 1974, made its first published appearances in a collection of papers edited by Cowie and Heaton in 1977 (Jordan 2002). By the time the journal *English for Specific Purposes* began in 1980, EAP was established as one of the two main branches of ESP together with EOP, English for Occupational Purposes. Today it is a major force in English Language Teaching and research around the world. At first sight EAP seems to be a practical response to the needs of particular group of students. However, EAP covers many areas of academic communicative practice: From classroom interaction to student writing and not forgetting research genres or administrative practices. These areas of academic communicative practice involve more than polishing

written style. In this volume it is shown how international research provides evidence for the heightened, complex and highly diversified nature of such demands. There is also a growing awareness of the needs of native English-speakers who have to engage with academic English when they enter university. Moreover, EAP has steadily reached the global market due to the growth of English as the leading language for the spread of academic knowledge. This situation has led teaching and researching in higher education to a new level of concern due to the huge growth in research into the genres and practices of different academic contexts. The result of this process has created what Hyland (2000) calls the “Academic English Discipline”. This has led to a change in teaching materials but also to a change in teacher training courses and Masters such as the internationally known MATESOL.

Above all, this work attempts (in three different sections) to aid those teachers who are trying to design a syllabus for an EAP university course or a postgraduate module. As a whole this book is an essential, interesting and comprehensible tool for novel researchers in the EAP field. Its symmetrical layout enables the reader to reach a full comprehension of both theory and practice. This work consists of three sections: A, B and C. Each section is divided into three themes and each theme is developed in four units.

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The first section, Section A, lays out the basic ideas concerning EAP and anticipates in summary form what is to come in sections B and C. These theoretical arguments are focused on the different existing approaches and perspectives that have already been developed despite the brevity of this *new-born* discipline. After each introduction of concepts, some direct questions are launched at the reader in order to make him or her reflect on the distinctive points of view, advantages or drawbacks that have just been expounded. In section B, extracts from a range of original and influential texts are provided. These core readings have been carefully selected, annotated and commented on. All the readings include pre-reading, while-reading and post reading tasks and questions, designed to help the reader to come to a better understanding of the text.

The units of the last section, C, allow the postgraduate student or teacher to engage actively with the subject matter of A and B sections. Their study is even taken further by participating in a range of desk and field research tasks. The exercises proposed may help teachers and graduate students concerned with EAP with their research and personal study.

As has been previously said, each section is broken down into three themes, each theme containing four units.

Theme number one deals with the nature of EAP. Its units are focused on different theories, critical pedagogy, study skills and the disciplinary specificity of teaching.

Theme number two explores key ideas and methods which inform EAP practice. Units in this theme deal with the influence of discourse, discipline and culture on academic communication. In addition, these units also deal with the use of genre analysis, corpus linguistics and ethnographic methods in understanding academic texts.

Theme number three is centred on the practical side of EAP as far as students' needs are concerned. In this topic the reader is introduced to tasks and teaching methods which should monitor the student's learning process.

Though already mentioned above, it is important to point out that the three sections —A, B and C—share the same layout and structure but a different approach to the same concept. For instance, Unit 1 from section A (A1) deals with the theoretical introduction to specific and general academic purposes. Unit 1 from section B (B1) gathers key published texts from the main scholars who have contributed to the former and present-day state of affairs—in this particular case of specific and general academic purposes—. Eventually, Unit 1 from section C (C1) suggests different tasks in order to work and explore with students the concepts proposed in each unit. Units 1, 2, 3, and 5 are collected in theme 1 and deal with conceptions and controversies of EAP. In Unit 5 to Unit 8, corresponding to theme 2, we are able to read about different literacies and practices of EAP today—such as corpus or genre analysis and academic texts. The last four units deal with design and delivery of activities related to EAP: needs analysis, methodologies, materials, feedback or assessment. The book also contains a glossary, a glossary index, a further reading section and an extensive bibliography section.

As a resource book, this work assists teachers or post-graduate students who want to know more about EAP, to get a clear picture of this apparently newborn discipline by means of a highly pedagogic formula. It is time, then, to turn our attention to the contents in detail.

In the First theme we are reminded that the applied nature of EAP and its emergence from ESP mainly responds to changes in higher education. Moreover, EAP has emerged as a sophisticated intersection of applied linguistics and education, following a more reflexive and research orientated perspective. This topic raises the main controversies which currently engage EAP teachers and emphasises some of the ways in which academic discourses are inextricably related to wider social, cultural and institutional issues.

Unit one deals mainly with the beginnings of the EAP discipline and the differences between, and implications, of ESAP (English for Specific Academic Purposes) and EGAP (English for General Academic Purposes). To this end, we are introduced to different approaches associated with Bhatia (2002:27) or Hutchinson and Waters (1987:165).

The second unit focuses on disciplinary expectations in practice. We read about the changing context of EAP along the recent history of Applied Linguistics and about two different approaches: Study Skills and Academic Literacies.

Unit three begins with one of the most frequently discussed topics, of particular relevance on account of globalization. The author remembers Swales's approach, among others, about how English has been adopted in higher education and research throughout the world. Thus, English could be conceived of as a *lingua franca*, efficiently facilitating the free exchange of knowledge or as a *Tyrannosaurus rex* "a powerful carnivore gobbling up the other denizens of the academic linguistic grazing grounds" (Swales 1997:374).

The last unit of this theme, Unit four, could be synthesized with the following question: is the role of EAP to help students to fit into roles in the disciplines and courses or to help students understand the power relations of those contexts? Scholars such as Widdowson (1990) claim that a pragmatic orientation to teaching ensures that action is informed by understanding, so that curricular decisions are underpinned by sensitivity to the context of teaching and to the most urgent needs of learners.

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Hyland acknowledges that EAP pedagogies help students to distinguish differences and provide them with a means of understanding their educational experiences in relation to their home experiences. Providing learners with ways of talking about language and how it works as communication in particular contexts can therefore assist them with the means of both communicating effectively in writing and of analysing texts critically.

As has been previously said, the second theme turns our attention to how language is used by individuals acting in social life. In the first theme, language is often presented, as it is in EGAP or in skills views of EAP as a transparent and autonomous system.

This theme highlights the way individuals participate in academic life and the theoretical and analytical tools we use to understand these forms of participation. Theme two focuses on the following key issues: the concepts of community and culture, the use of genre analysis and corpus linguistics in understanding spoken and written texts and the importance of understanding language in relation to its use in context.

Unit 5 deals with the ideas of discourse, communities, cultures or disciplinary variation. Generally speaking, learning a discipline implies, among other goals, learning to use language in a way approved by that discipline. The key concepts of a discipline, its methods of persuasion, its ways of negotiating interpretations and its practices of constructing knowledge are all defined through and by language. Thus, learning a discipline means learning to communicate as a member of a

community. Hence, the EAP teacher's job is to assist this process. Hyland also devotes this unit to an analysis of the concepts of discourse community, based on the theory of social constructivism, the role of culture or the rhetoric and its criticisms.

Units six, seven and eight tackle three different types of analysis when approaching academic texts. The three scopes of analysis have a close relation with Applied Linguistics and Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). For instance, due to internal linguistic criteria, texts which have similar formal features could be classified according to a particular gender.

The author selects from scholars such as Biber, examples and tables to illustrate the importance of corpus analysis. A *corpus* is a collection of naturally occurring texts used for linguistic study. While a corpus does not contain any new theories about language, it can offer insights on features of language use. The idea behind a corpus is that it represents a speaker's experience of language in some domains.

Ethnographically oriented analysis in EAP is obviously focused on the field of Ethnography. This approach is an interpretive and qualitative one that leads us to a research based on a study of behaviour in naturally occurring settings. Ethnographic studies take a wider view to consider the physical and experiential context in which language is used.

Having considered some key issues surrounding the nature of EAP and the methods it uses to understand its subject, this final theme, theme 3, pulls together some practical aspects of planning and teaching. Teachers therefore have to make a number of key decisions: about students' needs, about teaching approaches, and about the tasks, materials and assessment methods that will lead to the desired learning outcomes. Even though EAP is taught in a huge variety of settings all over the world, teachers have to be aware of the fact that any EAP course requires analysing the students' needs, developing a coherent course and sequence of learning, deciding on appropriate tasks and teaching methods, monitoring learner progress and providing effective intervention.

Unit 9 leads us little by little to the design and delivery of an EAP course. Therefore, the unit begins with an essential point of departure in language teaching since the arrival of ESP needs analysis (Dudley-Evans and St Johns 1998; Hutchinson and Waters 1987). It is indispensable for teachers who want to be effective to start where students are. As such, teachers have to get information about learners' current proficiencies and ambitions, strengths and weaknesses. Together with this, teachers should also consider students' learning context and their future linguistic roles.

Like the previous units, Unit ten offers the reader some outlines, tips or hints related to syllabus development and implementation. Teachers may not always have

freedom to choose what their courses will include and may find their syllabus handed to them by administrators or prescribed in set texts. Nevertheless, it is important to be aware of the fact that a key aspect of developing an EAP course is formulating goals and objectives from the data gathered by needs analysis. When getting to Unit 11 most readers will probably have the feeling that at some time they have been victims of methodologies and materials. Over the past twenty-five years, many have been the theories applied to language teaching. In EAP classrooms the framework differs from general language teaching in that the students bring both specialized knowledge and learning processes from their disciplines. In the last unit Hyland refers again to the importance of feedback and assessment. Assessment refers to the ways used to evaluate information about a learner's language ability or achievement. A formative assessment is closely linked with teaching and with issues of teacher response or feedback. Feedback is highly useful to EAP students who are aware of their learning process and who want to overcome their errors, mistakes or difficulties.

To conclude, it could be claimed that Hyland's novelty lies in the clarity with which he gathers key concepts of EAP, exposes the reader to the source texts of these concepts and makes him or her reflect on different processes and approaches. By way of ending his book, Ken Hyland assists novel teachers with a battery of activities about EAP designed not only to encourage reflection on the discipline but also to help them with their first steps as EAP teachers in EAP classrooms. This valuable contribution to EAP teaching is an important tool for those who want to work in this field with an indispensable resource book to have. Finally, a minor drawback could be that the reader might tire of the plethora of reflections which are suggested and launched after every approach.

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