



Teaching Academic Writing for EAP: Language Foundations for Practitioners

Milada Walková (Ed.)

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The divide between theory in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and its classroom teaching is a challenge for researchers in applied linguistics. *Teaching Academic Writing for EAP: Language Foundations for Practitioners*, by Milada Walková, sets out to address this divide by offering “the best evidence currently available” (p. 2). The book targets novice EAP tutors seeking to base their teaching in research and experienced practitioners aiming to refine their understanding of academic writing (p. 6).

The book guides readers from foundational theories to concrete teaching scenarios of EAP. Chapter 1 introduces the central problem of theory–practice misalignment. Chapter 2 explains the theory and method that inform the subsequent chapters, a friendly guide for novices in EAP. Chapters 3 and 4 examine textual and linguistic dimensions of academic writing, followed by discourse dimensions addressed by Chapters 5 and 6. The final chapter sheds light on formative feedback that Walková regards as central to the development of academic writing skills.

Walková opens with a clear assessment of EAP’s disciplinary identity. Although EAP supports students’ academic participation, it is still frequently perceived as a peripheral service rather than a cohesive discipline on its own (p. 2). In addition, some EAP courses rely heavily on instructors’ intuition rather than peer-reviewed research that informs teaching (Hyland, 2006, p. 5). Structural issues, such as insecure employment conditions for language scholars and the heterogeneous backgrounds of instructors (p. 2), have also discouraged EAP from building a consistent pedagogy. In response, Walková insists that EAP teaching should be grounded in peer-reviewed knowledge, rather than in inherited rules of thumb or enduring myths about academic writing. For example, Chinese students are often cautioned against making statements that begin with “I think” in academic writing. They are taught that the presence of an authorial position in academic writing is

unprofessional and subjective, which may reduce the validity of findings. This suggestion is unsubstantiated by empirical data, yet it has been passed down across generations of students.

The book situates teaching EAP within a broad range of yet coherent theories in Chapter 2. Walková incorporates major linguistic and pedagogical theories, ranging from epistemological models (Bloom's revised taxonomy; Bereiter and Scardamalia's distinction between knowledge-telling and knowledge-transforming), theories of language use (Systemic Functional Linguistics, metadiscourse, politeness theory), developments in language pedagogy (genre-based approaches; Complex Dynamic Systems Theory), to EAP-specific paradigms such as Academic Literacies and Critical Pragmatic EAP. She does not treat these as isolated frameworks but integrates them into a unified "knowledge base" for EAP professionals (p. 11).

Chapter 3 offers an insightful analysis of academic genres. Walková highlights what she terms the "EAP genre paradox". Students are often expected to read expert genres (such as research articles and textbooks) while being assessed on conventions of novice genres (such as book summaries). The differences between what students read and what they write discourage them from improving writing skills (p. 31). To address this gap, Walková provides move analyses of various scholarly genres (including book reviews, research reports, reflective writing, and essays) along with their corresponding linguistic realizations. Students could benefit from the moves of the abstract (p. 38), introduction (p. 39), methodology (p. 42), discussion (p. 44), and conclusion (p. 45).

Based on rhetorical moves, Chapter 4 explores common strategies for developing an argument. Procedures include presenting your findings in relation to the research question, explaining the findings, evaluating them in terms of their strength and limitations, suggesting implications, and comparing your results with those of others (p. 56). Walková's advice on developing arguments is inspiring for emerging scholars, especially those in the humanities. I remember when I submitted my first research article to a leading journal in cultural studies, reviewers complained that I had not fully developed my argument. This chapter explains what reviewers expect of a strong argument. In addition, Walková shows how grammar and vocabulary are employed to convey claims. Readers can find suggestions on writing hypotheses (p. 66), proper use of tense and voice (p. 63), and complex noun phrases like nominalization (p. 71). These suggestions invite EAP

practitioners to address common language challenges in writing academic prose.

Chapter 5 examines coherence and flow at the paragraph and sentence level. Key topics include the function and strategy of the topic sentence (p. 83), the principle of known-to-new progression (also known as Functional Sentence Perspective, please refer to p. 84), and methods for establishing cohesion across a text. What strikes me is that Walková does not blame EAP learners who do not write topic sentences in their writing, but explains the oversight as a result of insufficient models to learn from (p. 86). It is a friendly gesture for EAP beginners as it points out their problems while not diminishing their efforts. Walková also emphasizes the importance of concise academic writing, which enhances the impact of academic claims (p. 102). This chapter provides readers with guidance on producing texts that are structurally effective.

Chapter 6 is arguably one of the book's most myth-busting chapters by dealing with the elusive notion of "voice" in academic writing. It offers suggestions on stance (p. 111), attitude (p. 116), as well as hedging and boosting (p. 120) to moderate claims or express certainty in writing. Notably, Walková lifts the curtain of myth surrounding the prohibition of first-person pronouns (such as "I" and "we", p. 127). For hard disciplines such as physics, personal pronouns are favored to convey a personal dimension to research, rather than a detached analysis of data. In soft disciplines, such as cultural studies, authorial intrusions are not widely visible (Hyland & Jiang, 2019, p. 134). Findings and discussions in soft disciplines are often based on researchers' inductive analysis, sometimes without empirical evidence. Their research papers thus take a more prudent and implicitly invoked tone in making an authorial presence.

This book's contributions are twofold. First, it advances a corpus-informed approach to EAP pedagogy. Drawing on data from the British Academic Writing English Corpus (BAWE), Michigan Corpus of Upper-level Student Papers (MICUSP), and British National Corpus (BNC), Walková demonstrates how corpora can reveal patterns in academic writing (for instance, in terms of stance-taking, reporting verbs, and rhetorical moves). Her suggestions for turning to the corpus are beneficial for instructors to move beyond intuition-driven teaching. Secondly, the book reveals feedback as a key component of academic writing instruction. Walková encourages students to develop "literacy" to understand and respond to feedback in

EAP writing. Feedback assesses language skills, textual organization, and the validity of the argument. Meanwhile, instructors should praise the well-written sections, as encouragement helps beginners build confidence and understand what makes their writing effective.

I also have a few reservations about this monograph. First, it relies on written EAP and largely overlooks video academic genres. Many leading peer-reviewed journals in the humanities and social sciences (such as *Journalism* and *Communication Studies*) feature a special column for authors to upload video abstracts for their research articles. In these short videos of three to four minutes, authors introduce their research in English. The visual form of EAP responds to the learning habits of young scholars who have grown up with the spectacle of social media. Leaving this modality will risk missing out on new trends in EAP research.

Another limitation of this book is its mostly Anglophone academic focus. This goes against the fact that EAP continues to expand in non-Western institutions. A fundamental question remains in non-Western contexts that undergraduates are often unaware of the importance of EAP. In Chinese high schools, most students were taught to write a 150-word essay with grammatically correct sentences in English, while the development of argument and structure was often overlooked. Their experience in writing prevents them from understanding the importance of EAP in universities. I have found some students bury their heads in vocabulary or grammar books during EAP lectures. As a lecturer, I have spoken with some of them to determine the reasons for their lack of interest in EAP. They deem EAP useless because they do not publish research papers in international journals. On the other hand, some of them are expected to compile an English dissertation as partial fulfillment of the requirements of their bachelor's degree. They are confident that their current writing skills are sufficient to manage dissertations (often a myth). As it turns out, some of them are "lucky" when anonymous reviewers are generous in grading so that they pass without awareness of their EAP problems, while "unfortunate" ones will be shocked when their grades fall significantly below their expectations. Based on my personal teaching experience, I expect future research on increasing awareness of the importance of EAP among undergraduates in Chinese contexts.

Overall, *Teaching Academic Writing for EAP* offers insights into how theory informs teaching by incorporating theory, corpus-based evidence, and

teaching materials. The limitations include the lack of discussion on visual EAP and contexts outside Anglophone cultures. On the other hand, these limitations do not diminish the book as a highly accessible guide for teaching EAP. I highly recommend it to researchers and students interested in language teaching and applied linguistics.

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