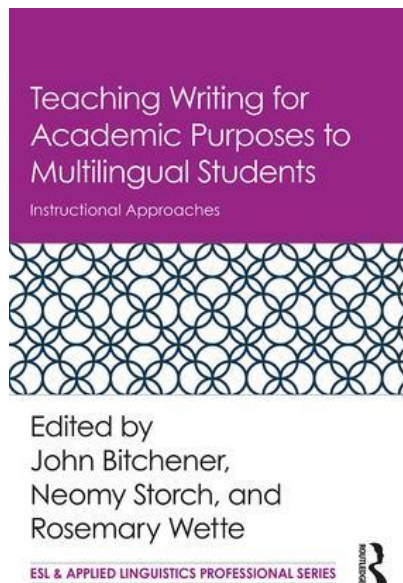# BOOK REVIEW

TEACHING ACADEMIC WRITING IN EAP

John Bitchener, Neomy Storch and Rosemary Wette (Eds.). TEACHING WRITING FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES TO MULTILINGUAL STUDENTS. INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACHES (2017), New York/London: Routledge. 220 pp., ISBN-978-1-1382-8423-4 (PBK).

The number of students learning in English is increasing rapidly, as a result of both student mobility and the rise of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) (Dearden, 2014). As long as writing remains a key assessment tool, there is, and will be, a large demand for practical, hands-on tools and advice for working with them. As a lecturer in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in a European context, it was extremely interesting to me to read about the suggestions put forward in this book, which are related to academic writing instruction in diverse contexts, particularly within tertiary level education.

The book is divided into three main parts and 13 chapters, written by distinguished names in the field of EAP and focusing on different instructional approaches to writing. Key issues in the field are discussed and summarized into four main areas by Christine P. Casanave in the final chapter: explicit instruction to fit local needs; steps, stages, sequences, trajectories; EAP tasks, activities, projects; and challenges faced by teachers. The first part of the book describes EAP courses adapted to different university degree programs. The second part is divided into three sections including instruction in specific EAP knowledge and skills; instructional tasks and activities; and approaches to academic language development. The third part looks at future research in EAP, with some interesting

and timely reflections from Rosa M. Manchón. This review will discuss each chapter in turn.

After chapter one introduces the volume as a whole, chapters two to four focus on EAP courses in different geographical locations, emphasizing the fact that these courses need to fit the context and purpose for which they are being used. In chapter two, Brian Paltridge describes the situation at the University of Sydney, where three courses have been designed to work with genre and student awareness of the expectations in their disciplinary field, emphasizing both text and context as an integral part of writing.

The challenges of adapting writing courses to context are dealt with in chapter three. Ken Hyland describes the situation in Hong Kong, where the university system has recently changed from three to four years. Two courses are discussed, one from the first year when the education is broader and one in later years once students have chosen their disciplines, focusing first on general EAP (learning to write) and later, on writing to learn. Since the latter course is based in the discipline itself, it is necessary for the language teachers to be aware of genre features of these disciplines. Hyland outlines some of the differences in genre features between arts/humanities and science/engineering including objectivity, use of references and writing process.

In chapter four, we move to another context with the United States and Purdue University. Tony Silva describes the long-term development of an EAP program for a large number of international students. The chapter includes a very detailed description of how the first-year composition course has been adapted to the international student needs including sequencing assignments.

Chapter five introduces the main section of the book, which contains seven chapters providing extremely useful reflections on aspects of EAP instruction. Christine M. Tardy takes up the challenge of teaching genre to new teachers in first year second language (L2) composition courses and making this meaningful for the students. First year students in the US are not in a disciplinary community yet but they still need genre awareness and rhetorical flexibility. In Tardy's study, teachers expressed concern as to whether students understood the purpose of genre activities and whether they could transfer the tools for analyzing genres to their own academic writing. Another key challenge for some teachers was working with linguistic aspects in the writing classroom. Tardy suggests four implications for teacher education: 1) that teaching of genre theories should be expanded to challenge assumptions; 2) that pedagogical models, techniques and applications should be discussed, such as tools like move analysis; 3) that frameworks and metalanguage should be created to explore language and discourse; and 4) that reflection should be used as an active tool.

In chapter six, John Bitchener takes up the challenge of teaching students how to argue effectively in their texts, particularly in the literature review section of a doctoral thesis, though the recommendations can be used for any argument construction. He identifies three characteristics of effective argument and three

stages of using the literature. For L2 writers, there are also linguistic concerns added to this and possible cultural issues with how an argument should be formed. Bitchener suggests a seven-stage scaffolded approach starting with reading and understanding the literature through identifying and recording relationships between key ideas to articulating an overview of the argument before finally writing up. These can be useful planning stages for all students in constructing their position in a text, especially in fields where students are expected to read and assimilate a lot of literature.

Rosemary Wette develops the idea of helping students use sources in chapter seven with very useful advice on how to provide explicit instruction on this through a range of practice tasks and constructive feedback. She questions assumptions of plagiarism being a cultural issue and instead points to the skill components required in using sources. Many novice L2 writers have similar issues, for example with the quality of the sources selected, overquoting and an overreliance on one source. She follows a trajectory from novice to proficient writer, from getting to grips with ideas in texts to having the confidence to be able to challenge authors' ideas, and suggests different course content for novice and intermediate level L2 writers.

Chapter eight takes a different direction, with Jennifer Hammond discussing literate talk and how this might contribute to a better quality of writing. She defines the content of literate talk as "discipline-specific vocabulary, as well as patterns of grammar and texts that enable students to discuss, classify, explain and argue and persuade" (p. 116) and argues that students need developed support to work with this in the same way as they need support with writing. Hammond gives an example of science talk in secondary schools and stresses the importance of sequencing speaking activities to enable both content understanding and improved writing skills in the area.

Chapter nine moves to the area of collaborative writing activities and the dilemmas of implementing and assessing these activities in the EAP classroom. Neomy Storch defines collaborative writing as the group cowriting of all sections and points out that this is a common way of working at university and in the workplace. Tasks in the EAP classroom can be meaning focused, such as data commentary, or language focused, such as peer review. Advantages of collaborative writing are several: exposing participants to a range of ideas; engaging them critically with different ideas; and enabling them to practice teamwork and negotiation skills. However, there can be other issues as well – for example, if first and second language writers collaborate, the L2 writers tend to take a passive role. Storch suggests strategies such as small groups and being aware of proficiency levels as well as grading the texts individually by taking other tasks into account.

Chapters ten and eleven focus on the area of teacher feedback and correction of texts. While Dana Ferris argues for a proactive approach to feedback, Icy Lee discusses corrective feedback of student texts. Ferris states that treatment of error

is essentially reactive and does not necessarily lead to development of vocabulary and syntax. One issue is that of transfer from instruction to practice. Since learners cannot always apply knowledge from decontextualized formal grammar instruction to their own writing, it is argued that it is better done through exposure to meaningful content and that activities promoting metalinguistic awareness and metacognition about writing and language use increase the possibility that students will transfer and extend their knowledge. Ferris then goes on to provide some examples of how these activities might be carried out including a useful self-assessment form for students to fill in so that they can identify their own needs.

In chapter eleven, Icy Lee compares comprehensive to focused written feedback and discusses the affordances of both. Comprehensive feedback is a more conventional approach where a teacher responds to all errors in a text, whereas focused feedback selects specific errors. Lee points out that students generally expect comprehensive feedback, which is overwhelming for teachers as it is often impossible to identify all errors. It can also be demotivating for students and distract them from higher order concerns such as structure. She suggests adapting feedback to the proficiency level of students as well as the complexity of the target grammar structures. A challenge for readers is how to move student focus from the comprehensive feedback that they expect to the suggestions made by Ferris and Lee.

In chapter twelve Rosa M. Manchón continues the discussion of useful forms of feedback, whether it is for accuracy or for acquisition, and raises the dilemma of balancing learning-to-write with writing-to-learn activities in the classroom. She emphasizes the fact that most students are working with English as an L2, and highlights research on the linguistic component of L2 academic written literacy with two key foci: texts and writers. In terms of writers, this is further divided into psycholinguistic concerns and language-related challenges, dilemmas and risks. Manchón points out that it is important to balance pragmatic and socio-political issues and that novice writers are advised to follow the former in terms of learning the dominant discourse as opposed to challenging it.

This discussion is also brought up by Christine P. Casanave at the end of the book. She proposes four interesting future directions, two of which concern the Anglophone dominance in EAP and a request that L2 scholars write about their challenges in writing in English (such as in Lillis & Curry, 2010). Though this discussion would perhaps go beyond the scope of this book, the book would have benefitted, I believe, from more examples where English is taught in non-native English-speaking environments. The title *Teaching Writing for Academic Purposes to Multilingual Students* suggested a wider range of linguistically diverse settings to me, from an English as L1 setting to EMI settings, or even students writing in L2s other than English (Kuteeva & Mauranen, 2014). That would embrace the multilingual realities that many of us work and teach within.

With that said, EAP practitioners will definitely benefit from reading this book. Those fairly new to the field will find example courses and step-by-step

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guidelines on aspects such as the use of sources, creating argumentative texts, giving feedback and collaborative activities. More experienced practitioners will find new angles on aspects such as genre and academic talk.

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