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## ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES: RETHINKING CURRICULUM DESIGN AND PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES

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### Abstract

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) has become a central field within applied linguistics and English language teaching, especially in contexts where English functions as the medium of instruction and scholarly communication. The demands of higher education, internationalization, and academic publishing have compelled educators and institutions to rethink both curriculum design and pedagogical practices in EAP. Traditional approaches that emphasize grammar, vocabulary, and study skills are increasingly seen as insufficient for preparing learners to participate effectively in disciplinary discourse communities. Instead, innovative models informed by genre theory, systemic functional linguistics, academic literacy, and corpus-based insights are shaping a more dynamic and context-sensitive curriculum. This article critically reviews the evolution of EAP, highlighting the theoretical frameworks underpinning curriculum design and the pedagogical shifts toward task-based learning, collaborative practices, and technology-enhanced instruction. It argues that sustainable EAP programs must balance global academic standards with local linguistic and cultural realities. Challenges such as inadequate teacher training, resource limitations, and diverse learner needs are examined, alongside recommendations for integrating critical pedagogy, flexible curriculum structures, and learner autonomy. Ultimately, the paper recommends that Education policy makers and Curriculum designers should design the curriculum that is dynamic, flexible, and interdisciplinary, among other things.

**Keywords:** English for Academic Purposes, curriculum design, pedagogical practices, academic literacies, higher education

### Introduction

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) has emerged as a specialized domain within applied linguistics and English language education, focusing on equipping learners with the communicative skills required to function effectively in academic settings. The increasing globalization of higher education, the dominance of English as the lingua franca of research, and the growing mobility of students and scholars have heightened the relevance of EAP worldwide (Hyland & Jiang, 2021). In universities across Anglophone and non-Anglophone countries alike, students are expected to read complex academic texts, participate in seminars, deliver

presentations, and produce research papers in English. However, the linguistic, cultural, and epistemological demands of these practices often exceed the preparation students receive through general English language courses. EAP thus fills a crucial gap by addressing the specific discourse, genres, and literacy practices of academia.

Historically, EAP developed from the broader field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in the 1960s and 1970s, when scholars began to recognize that learners' needs varied according to their academic and professional contexts (Jordan, 2023). Early approaches often

emphasized study skills and remedial language instruction, treating academic English as a technical tool for comprehension and production. Over time, however, theoretical advances in genre analysis (Swales, 1990), systemic functional linguistics (Halliday, 1994), and academic literacies (Lea & Street, 1998) shifted attention to the social and disciplinary dimensions of academic communication. Today, EAP is understood not merely as language training but as an engagement with disciplinary knowledge, identity formation, and participation in global scholarly communities (Wingate & Tribble, 2020).

Curriculum design and pedagogy in EAP, however, remain contested. Traditional models that foreground grammar, vocabulary, and essay structures are criticized for being decontextualized and insufficient for authentic academic communication (Hyland, 2019). In contrast, needs-based and genre-informed curricula emphasize the importance of tailoring instruction to the specific academic disciplines and communicative practices of learners (Basturkmen, 2020). Pedagogically, there has been a shift from teacher-centered approaches toward more interactive and learner-centered practices, including task-based learning, peer collaboration, and the use of digital tools (Flowerdew & Wang, 2016). These innovations reflect a recognition that academic communication is both situated and dynamic, requiring adaptability rather than mastery of fixed rules.

Despite these advances, challenges persist in the practice of EAP. Many institutions struggle with balancing global academic standards with local linguistic and cultural realities. For example, while English proficiency is often a prerequisite for international publication, the dominance of English also raises concerns about linguistic imperialism and epistemic inequality (Canagarajah, 2022). Moreover, EAP teachers often face issues of limited training in both linguistics and pedagogy, resource constraints, and diverse student populations with varying levels of preparedness (Jenkins & Mauranen, 2019). These challenges underscore the need to

rethink how curricula are designed and how pedagogical practices are implemented in ways that are both inclusive and effective.

This paper critically explores the rethinking of curriculum design and pedagogical practices in English for Academic Purposes. Drawing on recent scholarship, it examines the theoretical frameworks that inform EAP, discusses contemporary approaches to curriculum design, and evaluates pedagogical innovations suited for the 21st-century academic landscape. The paper further identifies persistent challenges and suggests strategies for building sustainable and context-sensitive EAP programs. By highlighting the intersection of theory, practice, and policy, the paper argues that rethinking EAP requires a paradigm shift toward inclusivity, interdisciplinarity, and adaptability.

In doing so, the paper contributes to ongoing debates about the future of EAP in higher education and global scholarship. It advocates for curricula that go beyond surface-level skills to engage with deeper issues of critical literacy, disciplinary identity, and academic participation. Likewise, it calls for pedagogical practices that leverage collaboration, technology, and critical reflection to empower learners as active members of academic communities. Ultimately, the rethinking of EAP curriculum design and pedagogy is not merely a linguistic or educational concern but a matter of equity and access in global knowledge production.

### **Theoretical Frameworks of English for Academic Purposes**

A critical aspect of rethinking English for Academic Purposes (EAP) lies in understanding the theoretical foundations that have shaped its development. Over the decades, different frameworks have informed curriculum design and pedagogical practices, shifting the field from a skills-based orientation to one that considers discourse, identity, and socio-cultural contexts. Among the most influential frameworks are genre theory, academic literacies, systemic functional linguistics (SFL), and needs analysis. Together, these perspectives provide a comprehensive basis for designing curricula and

teaching practices that address the complexities of academic communication.

### **Genre Theory**

Genre theory has been one of the most significant influences on EAP pedagogy, particularly since John Swales's (1990) pioneering work on discourse communities. In this framework, genres are understood not merely as text types but as socially situated communicative events that fulfill specific purposes within academic and professional communities. For instance, the structure of a research article introduction—often described using Swales's "Create a Research Space (CARS)" model—is not simply a matter of linguistic form but a reflection of how scholars establish credibility, situate research, and signal contributions to knowledge (Swales, 2004).

By adopting a genre-based approach, EAP curricula can move beyond teaching generic essay formats to addressing discipline-specific practices. Hyland (2019) argues that genre pedagogy empowers learners by making explicit the conventions and expectations of academic discourse, enabling them to participate more effectively in their fields. Furthermore, genre awareness fosters critical literacy, allowing students to recognize that academic writing is shaped by power, authority, and disciplinary norms rather than neutral linguistic rules (Tardy, 2020).

In practice, genre theory has led to teaching methods that involve analyzing authentic texts, modeling academic writing, and engaging learners in producing discipline-relevant genres. This approach aligns curriculum design with the actual communicative demands of academia, providing learners with strategies to navigate diverse discourse communities.

### **Academic Literacies**

While genre theory emphasizes discourse structures and conventions, the academic literacies framework expands the lens to include broader issues of identity, epistemology, and power in academic communication. Developed by Lea and Street (1998), this model critiques

earlier "study skills" approaches for treating writing as a technical skill rather than a socially and culturally embedded practice. Academic literacies foreground the idea that writing involves negotiating meanings, values, and identities within institutions and disciplines.

According to this framework, students often encounter not one but multiple literacies, reflecting the diverse expectations of different academic fields. For example, the norms of argumentation in the humanities differ substantially from those in the sciences. The academic literacies perspective thus views challenges in academic writing not as deficits in student ability but as clashes between institutional expectations and learners' prior linguistic and cultural experiences (Lillis & Tuck, 2016).

Pedagogically, this framework encourages curricula that go beyond surface-level correction to engage students in discussions about how knowledge is constructed, represented, and legitimized in academic settings. It promotes a dialogic approach in which students and teachers collaboratively explore the underlying values of academic discourse (Wingate, 2018). In this way, academic literacies contribute to more inclusive and reflective EAP practices that acknowledge the diversity of learners and challenge the hegemony of English in academia.

### **Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)**

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), developed by Halliday (1994), provides another powerful framework for EAP by linking language to meaning-making in context. SFL conceptualizes language as a resource for realizing three metafunctions: the ideational (representing experience), the interpersonal (enacting relationships), and the textual (organizing discourse). From this perspective, academic writing is not just about producing grammatically correct sentences but about using language strategically to convey complex ideas, position oneself in relation to others, and structure coherent arguments.

SFL has been especially influential in the

teaching of academic writing, where it informs the analysis of how grammatical choices shape meaning. For example, scientific texts often rely on nominalization and passive constructions to present information impersonally and objectively, while humanities texts may employ evaluative language to construct arguments (Martin & Rose, 2008). By making these linguistic patterns explicit, EAP teachers can help learners understand how language choices align with disciplinary practices and communicative goals.

Curriculum design informed by SFL emphasizes scaffolding, where learners are guided from understanding linguistic features to applying them in their own writing. This approach is consistent with the "teaching-learning cycle," which includes modeling, joint construction, and independent construction of texts (Rose & Martin, 2012). Such pedagogy enables learners to develop both linguistic competence and awareness of how language functions in different academic contexts.

### **Needs Analysis**

Needs analysis is another foundational framework in EAP, stemming from the early development of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). It involves systematically identifying the communicative needs, goals, and challenges of learners within their specific academic or professional contexts (Basturkmen, 2020). Needs analysis can take multiple forms, including surveys, interviews, classroom observations, and analysis of target texts, and it informs decisions about curriculum content, materials, and teaching methods.

The rationale for needs analysis is that learners require not just general English skills but the ability to engage in tasks relevant to their fields. For instance, engineering students may need to read technical reports and write project proposals, while medical students may prioritize case reports and research abstracts. By aligning instruction with these needs, EAP curricula can provide more targeted and meaningful learning experiences (Long, 2016).

However, needs analysis is not without

limitations. Critics argue that it often assumes a static view of learners' goals and may overemphasize functional aspects at the expense of critical engagement (Belcher, 2019). To address this, contemporary approaches to needs analysis combine functional perspectives with considerations of learner identity, agency, and institutional constraints. This broader view aligns with the interdisciplinary nature of EAP and supports the design of curricula that are flexible, learner-centered, and contextually relevant.

### **Synthesis of Theoretical Perspectives**

Taken together, these frameworks illustrate the multidimensional nature of EAP. Genre theory highlights the importance of discourse conventions; academic literacies emphasize identity, power, and diversity; systemic functional linguistics provides a linguistic lens for analyzing meaning-making; and needs analysis ensures that curricula are responsive to learners' goals. Each framework contributes unique insights, and their integration offers a robust foundation for rethinking curriculum design and pedagogy.

In practice, an effective EAP program might draw on genre theory to analyze research articles, use SFL to explain the linguistic resources that shape arguments, adopt an academic literacies perspective to discuss epistemological differences across disciplines, and employ needs analysis to tailor instruction to specific learner groups. Such an integrated approach ensures that EAP teaching is both theoretically informed and practically relevant, preparing learners for the multifaceted demands of academic life.

### **Curriculum Design in English for Academic Purposes**

The design of curriculum in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) has long been a central concern for researchers and practitioners. Unlike general English courses, EAP curricula must balance linguistic, disciplinary, and academic demands to prepare learners for effective participation in higher education and scholarly communities. Over the decades, different models have emerged, from traditional



skills-based designs to more dynamic and interdisciplinary frameworks. Rethinking EAP curriculum today requires critical engagement with these models while also addressing emerging challenges in global academia.

**Traditional Models:** Grammar and Study Skills  
Early approaches to EAP curriculum design were heavily influenced by the perception of academic English as a set of technical skills to be mastered. Courses often emphasized grammar instruction, vocabulary development, and essay writing as universal tools for academic success (Jordan, 2023). These curricula treated academic language as neutral and transferable, assuming that students could apply generic skills across disciplines without difficulty.

The "study skills" tradition also shaped early curricula, focusing on note-taking, summarizing, referencing, and examination strategies (Allison, 2020). While these skills remain useful, critics argue that such models are too decontextualized and reductive, failing to recognize the disciplinary and cultural dimensions of academic literacy (Hyland, 2019). For example, the conventions of constructing an argument in philosophy differ substantially from those in engineering, yet traditional curricula often ignored such distinctions.

Although outdated in many contexts, traditional models persist in institutions where resources are limited or where EAP is viewed primarily as remedial support. Their continued use underscores the importance of advocating for more innovative and context-sensitive curriculum designs.

### Needs-Based Curriculum

A significant shift in EAP curriculum design occurred with the introduction of needs analysis, which emphasized tailoring instruction to the communicative requirements of learners' academic fields (Basturkmen, 2020). Needs-based curricula prioritize relevance by incorporating tasks, genres, and materials directly related to students' disciplines. For instance, business students might analyze case studies and prepare reports, while medical

students might focus on patient histories and research abstracts.

Needs-based design reflects the principles of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), ensuring that learners acquire the skills most relevant to their immediate and future academic contexts (Long, 2016). This approach not only enhances motivation but also makes EAP instruction more efficient by avoiding unnecessary content.

However, critics caution against an overly functionalist interpretation of needs-based curricula. Belcher (2019) argues that learners' goals are often dynamic and cannot be fully captured through one-time needs assessments. Moreover, focusing narrowly on immediate tasks may limit students' ability to transfer skills across contexts. For this reason, needs-based curricula are most effective when combined with broader frameworks that address identity, critical thinking, and disciplinary literacy.

### Integrated Skills and Interdisciplinary Approaches

Contemporary perspectives on EAP curriculum design emphasize integration—both of language skills and disciplinary knowledge. The integrated skills approach recognizes that academic communication rarely occurs in isolation: reading, writing, listening, and speaking are interdependent processes. For example, writing a research paper often requires reading scholarly articles, engaging in discussions, and presenting findings orally. Designing curricula that integrate these skills mirrors authentic academic practices and enhances learners' ability to navigate complex tasks (Hyland & Shaw, 2016).

Interdisciplinarity also plays a crucial role in modern curriculum design. Rather than teaching generic skills, many programs now incorporate discipline-specific modules that reflect the epistemological values of different fields (Wingate, 2018). For instance, the "argument" in the humanities may emphasize rhetorical persuasion, while in the sciences it prioritizes empirical evidence and methodological rigor. By embedding EAP instruction within disciplinary

contexts, curricula foster not only language competence but also epistemological awareness. This shift toward interdisciplinarity reflects a growing recognition that EAP is not merely a support service but an integral component of academic learning. Collaboration between language specialists and subject experts has become increasingly common, resulting in curricula that are both linguistically and academically robust (Tardy, 2020).

### **Assessment and Feedback in EAP Curriculum**

Assessment is a vital component of curriculum design, shaping how learning outcomes are defined and achieved. In traditional EAP curricula, assessment often focused on grammar tests or standardized essay formats. However, such approaches are limited in capturing learners' ability to perform authentic academic tasks (Fulcher, 2019).

Recent trends emphasize performance-based assessment, such as research projects, oral presentations, and portfolio submissions, which align more closely with academic practices (Green, 2020). These assessments not only measure linguistic accuracy but also evaluate critical thinking, organization, and disciplinary engagement. Furthermore, formative assessment has gained prominence, with ongoing feedback helping students refine their work throughout the learning process (Lee, 2020).

Feedback practices in EAP have also evolved. While corrective feedback remains important, there is increasing recognition of the value of dialogic feedback, in which teachers and students engage in dialogue to negotiate meaning and clarify expectations (Hyland & Hyland, 2019). Peer feedback is another growing trend, fostering collaboration and learner autonomy while reducing teacher workload.

**Assessment literacy**—the ability of teachers to design, implement, and interpret assessments effectively—is central to this shift. Without adequate training, teachers may default to traditional testing methods, undermining the potential of more innovative curricula. Thus,

professional development in assessment literacy is essential for advancing EAP curriculum design (O'Sullivan, 2022).

### **Rethinking Curriculum for the 21st Century**

The challenges of globalization, digitalization, and academic mobility require EAP curricula that are flexible, inclusive, and forward-looking. Emerging models emphasize critical EAP, which goes beyond functional skills to interrogate issues of power, inequality, and linguistic diversity in academia (Benesch, 2020). Such curricula encourage students to question the dominance of English in global scholarship and to develop strategies for navigating multilingual academic spaces.

Additionally, the integration of technology has transformed curriculum possibilities. Digital platforms, corpora, and artificial intelligence tools enable data-driven learning, personalized feedback, and expanded access to academic resources (Flowerdew & Wang, 2016). At the same time, curricula must address digital literacies, preparing students to evaluate online sources, engage in virtual collaborations, and publish in digital formats.

Ultimately, rethinking EAP curriculum design involves moving beyond a remedial orientation to position EAP as a field that empowers learners to participate in and contribute to global knowledge production. This requires curricula that are adaptable to diverse contexts, informed by interdisciplinary collaboration, and committed to equity and inclusion.

### **Pedagogical Practices in English for Academic Purposes**

If curriculum provides the framework for what is taught in English for Academic Purposes (EAP), pedagogy determines how it is enacted in the classroom. The teaching of EAP has undergone significant evolution, moving from traditional, teacher-centered instruction toward more interactive, learner-centered, and technology-enhanced approaches. Effective pedagogy in EAP not only transmits linguistic knowledge but also fosters critical thinking, learner autonomy, and engagement with disciplinary discourses.

This section discusses key pedagogical practices shaping EAP today, including task-based learning, collaborative learning, corpus-informed teaching, technology-enhanced instruction, and critical pedagogy.

### **Task-Based Learning**

Task-based learning (TBL) has been widely adopted in EAP because it mirrors the kinds of authentic activities learners encounter in academia. A task is defined as a communicative activity with a real-world outcome that requires learners to use language meaningfully rather than mechanically (Ellis, 2020). In EAP contexts, tasks may include summarizing research articles, presenting findings, leading seminars, or writing abstracts.

Research indicates that task-based pedagogy enhances both fluency and accuracy, as learners are motivated to use language for genuine purposes (Willis & Willis, 2021). For example, designing a mini-research project allows students to integrate skills such as reading academic literature, analyzing data, and presenting results. Such tasks align with academic practices, thereby making learning more relevant and transferable.

However, TBL in EAP must be carefully scaffolded. Complex academic tasks can overwhelm learners if not broken into manageable steps with clear instructions and feedback. Teachers play a crucial role in sequencing tasks, providing models, and supporting reflection. When implemented effectively, task-based pedagogy fosters problem-solving, critical thinking, and learner engagement with academic genres.

### **Collaborative and Peer Learning**

Collaboration has become a cornerstone of contemporary EAP pedagogy. Group discussions, peer review, and co-authoring activities not only enhance language development but also reflect the collaborative nature of academic knowledge production (Storch, 2019). Peer learning provides opportunities for learners to negotiate meaning, share strategies, and receive immediate feedback in ways that complement teacher input.

Peer feedback on academic writing is particularly valuable. Research shows that students often benefit from seeing how peers interpret and evaluate their work, which fosters audience awareness and meta-cognitive skills (Yu & Hu, 2017). Collaborative writing projects, such as drafting research reports or preparing conference posters, also replicate the joint authorship practices common in academic communities.

Nevertheless, collaboration in EAP is not without challenges. Unequal participation, cultural differences in communication styles, and resistance to peer critique can limit effectiveness. Teachers must therefore establish clear guidelines, provide training in constructive feedback, and create inclusive classroom environments that value diversity. When well managed, collaborative pedagogy promotes learner autonomy, interpersonal skills, and confidence in academic communication.

### **Corpus-Informed Teaching**

Corpus linguistics has opened new pedagogical possibilities in EAP by providing empirical insights into authentic language use. Corpora are large collections of texts that can be analyzed to identify patterns of vocabulary, grammar, and discourse. In EAP, corpus-informed teaching helps learners understand how academic language is used in different disciplines (Flowerdew, 2015).

For example, corpus tools can reveal frequent collocations in research articles, such as “significant difference,” “further research,” or “it is evident that.” Exposure to such patterns helps learners acquire phraseological competence, which is critical for sounding natural and authoritative in academic writing (Chen & Baker, 2019). Concordance activities, where students analyze examples from corpora, also promote inductive learning by allowing learners to discover rules for themselves.

Corpus-informed pedagogy aligns well with genre-based instruction, as it grounds abstract explanations in real language data. Moreover, corpus tools have become increasingly



accessible through online platforms, enabling both teachers and learners to engage with authentic texts. However, effective use requires training, as students may find corpus analysis challenging without adequate guidance (Boulton & Vyatkina, 2021).

### **Technology-Enhanced Learning**

Digital technologies have transformed EAP pedagogy, particularly in response to the expansion of online learning and the integration of artificial intelligence in education. Technology-enhanced learning (TEL) offers multiple affordances, including access to authentic resources, opportunities for multimodal communication, and personalized feedback.

Learning management systems (LMS) and online collaboration platforms facilitate asynchronous and synchronous interaction, enabling students to practice academic communication in virtual settings (Hampel & Stickler, 2019). Tools such as Turnitin and Grammarly provide automated feedback on writing, helping learners identify errors and improve accuracy. At the same time, video conferencing platforms allow for virtual seminars, presentations, and peer discussions, replicating academic practices in digital environments.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is emerging as a particularly powerful tool in EAP. AI-driven language learning applications can provide instant feedback on pronunciation, coherence, and lexical choices, offering individualized support (Li & Cummins, 2021). However, TEL also raises concerns about digital literacy, equity of access, and overreliance on technology. Effective pedagogy requires integrating digital tools thoughtfully, ensuring they complement rather than replace human interaction and critical engagement.

### **Critical Pedagogy in EAP**

A growing strand of EAP pedagogy emphasizes critical pedagogy, which challenges traditional notions of academic English as a neutral medium. Instead, it positions EAP as a site where

issues of power, identity, and inequality must be addressed (Benesch, 2020). Critical EAP encourages learners to question why English dominates global academia, how disciplinary norms privilege certain voices, and what strategies can empower marginalized scholars.

In practice, critical pedagogy may involve analyzing how academic texts reflect particular epistemologies, discussing alternative rhetorical traditions, or exploring the politics of English-medium publishing (Canagarajah, 2022). Such practices not only develop language skills but also foster critical awareness and agency.

Critics argue that critical pedagogy risks politicizing EAP and overwhelming students who primarily seek practical skills. Yet proponents contend that academic literacy cannot be divorced from questions of power and access. Incorporating critical perspectives ensures that EAP pedagogy prepares learners not just to succeed within existing systems but also to engage with and potentially transform them.

### **Synthesis of Pedagogical Approaches**

The pedagogical practices discussed—task-based learning, collaboration, corpus-informed teaching, technology-enhanced instruction, and critical pedagogy—are not mutually exclusive. In fact, effective EAP pedagogy often blends these approaches to meet diverse learner needs. For example, a course might integrate corpus analysis into a collaborative writing project, supported by digital tools and framed within a critical discussion of disciplinary conventions. Such integrated pedagogy reflects the complexity of academic communication and prepares learners for the realities of higher education and research. Ultimately, rethinking EAP pedagogy involves moving beyond one-size-fits-all methods to embrace flexibility, inclusivity, and innovations.

### **Challenges in Current EAP Practices**

Despite the advances in curriculum design and pedagogy, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) continues to face a number of persistent challenges that limit its effectiveness in higher education contexts. These challenges reflect not

only pedagogical and institutional issues but also broader sociolinguistic and political dynamics. Understanding these obstacles is crucial for rethinking EAP in ways that are equitable, inclusive, and sustainable. Key challenges include teacher training and assessment literacy, student diversity and motivation, resource limitations, and tensions between global standards and local needs.

### **Teacher Training and Assessment Literacy**

One of the most widely acknowledged challenges in EAP is the limited preparation of teachers. Many instructors come from general English language teaching (ELT) backgrounds and may lack specialized training in academic discourse, disciplinary conventions, or assessment practices (Hyland & Shaw, 2016). As a result, they often rely on generic teaching methods that fail to address the complex demands of academic literacy.

Assessment literacy is a particularly pressing issue. EAP instructors are frequently tasked with evaluating learners' academic writing, presentations, and research projects, yet many lack formal training in designing valid and reliable assessments (Fulcher, 2019). Without this expertise, assessment risks being inconsistent, overly focused on surface-level accuracy, or misaligned with learners' actual needs. Lee (2020) stresses that teacher development in assessment literacy is essential for ensuring that feedback and grading practices genuinely support student learning.

Professional development opportunities, however, are often limited due to institutional resource constraints. Teachers may have little access to training in genre analysis, corpus linguistics, or technology-enhanced instruction, which are increasingly necessary for modern EAP. Consequently, the gap between theoretical advances in the field and classroom practice remains wide.

### **Student Diversity and Motivation**

EAP classrooms are often highly diverse, bringing together learners from different linguistic, cultural, and educational

backgrounds. While this diversity enriches the learning environment, it also poses challenges for curriculum and pedagogy. Students vary not only in their proficiency levels but also in their prior exposure to academic conventions, expectations of teacher-student relationships, and learning strategies (Jenkins & Mauranen, 2019).

For example, students from educational traditions that emphasize rote memorization may struggle with the critical thinking and argumentation skills required in Western-style academia. Similarly, learners accustomed to indirect rhetorical styles may find it difficult to adapt to the linear and explicit argument structures common in English academic writing (Wingate, 2018). Teachers must navigate these differences carefully, avoiding deficit perspectives while still helping students meet institutional expectations.

Motivation is another concern. Many students view EAP as a gatekeeping requirement rather than an integral part of their academic development. This perception can result in disengagement, particularly when curricula are perceived as irrelevant or overly remedial (Hyland, 2019). Addressing motivation requires making explicit connections between EAP activities and learners' disciplinary goals, as well as fostering learner autonomy through engaging and meaningful tasks.

### **Resource Constraints**

Resource limitations also hinder the effectiveness of EAP programs, especially in non-Anglophone contexts where English is not the primary medium of instruction. Many institutions lack adequate funding for specialized EAP courses, modern learning technologies, or access to academic corpora and databases (Flowerdew & Wang, 2016). Large class sizes further restrict opportunities for individualized feedback and active learning.

Moreover, EAP is sometimes marginalized within universities, regarded as a remedial service rather than a core academic function. This institutional positioning often results in

limited recognition, funding, and status for EAP teachers (Benesch, 2020). Such conditions undermine the potential for innovative curriculum and pedagogy, perpetuating reliance on outdated skills-based models.

The lack of collaboration between language specialists and disciplinary faculty is another resource-related challenge. Without institutional structures that encourage interdisciplinary partnerships, EAP risks being disconnected from the academic practices it is meant to support.

### **Global Standards vs. Local Needs**

Perhaps the most complex challenge in EAP is balancing global academic standards with local linguistic and cultural realities. English dominates as the lingua franca of research and higher education, shaping curricula, pedagogy, and assessment practices worldwide (Hyland & Jiang, 2021). While this dominance facilitates international communication, it also reinforces inequalities by privileging native English norms and marginalizing other epistemologies (Canagarajah, 2022).

In many contexts, students are expected to conform to Anglo-American rhetorical and publishing conventions, even when these clash with their cultural or disciplinary traditions. This raises concerns about linguistic imperialism and epistemic injustice (Lillis & Curry, 2018). For instance, African or Asian students may find that their rhetorical preferences—such as circular argumentation or deference to authority—are undervalued in Anglophone academic writing.

EAP teachers and curriculum designers must therefore grapple with a paradox: how to prepare students for success in global academia while also respecting and integrating local identities and traditions. Critical EAP approaches attempt to address this by encouraging learners to reflect on power dynamics and develop strategies for negotiating multiple academic cultures (Benesch, 2020). However, implementing such approaches requires institutional support, which is often lacking.

### **Synthesis of Challenges**

The challenges of teacher training, student diversity, resource constraints, and global-local tensions are deeply interconnected. Limited professional development exacerbates difficulties in addressing diverse learner needs; resource shortages restrict access to innovative pedagogies; and global academic norms intensify pressures on both teachers and students. Addressing these challenges requires systemic change at multiple levels—curriculum, pedagogy, institutional policy, and global academic practices.

By acknowledging and analyzing these obstacles, EAP practitioners and policymakers can better understand the complexity of the field and identify strategies for meaningful reform. Ultimately, overcoming these challenges is essential for ensuring that EAP fulfills its role not merely as a gate-keeping mechanism but as an empowering force for learners entering the global academic community.

### **Rethinking EAP for the 21st Century**

The 21st century has brought unprecedented changes to higher education, research, and global communication. International student mobility, digital transformation, and the dominance of English in global academia have redefined what it means to be academically literate. For English for Academic Purposes (EAP), these changes demand a fundamental rethinking of both curriculum design and pedagogical practices. Rather than treating EAP as remedial or peripheral, there is a growing consensus that it should be positioned at the heart of higher education, supporting learners' participation in knowledge production and global scholarship (Hyland & Jiang, 2021). This section highlights four key directions for rethinking EAP: curriculum innovation, pedagogical shifts, policy implications, and sustainability in the context of global academic mobility.

#### **Curriculum Innovation**

EAP curricula must evolve beyond traditional skills-based models to reflect the complex, interdisciplinary nature of academic communication. One promising innovation is the development of flexible, modular curricula that

allow students to select learning pathways aligned with their disciplinary and career goals (Wingate, 2018). For example, students in the sciences might focus on research reporting and data presentation, while those in the humanities might engage more with argumentation, critical reading, and theoretical synthesis.

Curricula should also integrate critical academic literacies, enabling students to interrogate the ideological dimensions of academic discourse (Lillis & Curry, 2018). By exposing learners to the politics of publishing, authorship, and citation practices, EAP can foster awareness of how knowledge is constructed and valued. This prepares students not only to conform to dominant academic norms but also to negotiate them strategically.

Another dimension of curriculum innovation is the incorporation of digital and multimodal literacies. In an era where academic communication extends beyond journal articles to include blogs, podcasts, webinars, and infographics, students must learn to navigate and produce knowledge in multiple formats (Hampel & Stickler, 2019). Embedding multimodality in curricula equips learners with transferable skills for both academic and professional contexts.

### **Pedagogical Shifts**

Pedagogy in EAP must also adapt to the realities of 21st-century learning. A key shift involves embracing learner-centered approaches that prioritize autonomy, agency, and critical engagement. Instead of positioning students as passive recipients of linguistic knowledge, pedagogy should empower them as active participants in knowledge construction (Benesch, 2020).

Collaborative and project-based learning are particularly relevant. These approaches mirror the teamwork and interdisciplinary collaboration that characterize much of contemporary research (Storch, 2019). For example, students might work in groups to design a research proposal, conduct a small-scale study, and present findings at a simulated academic conference. Such projects not only develop language skills but also

promote problem-solving, critical thinking, and professional competencies.

Technology-enhanced pedagogy is another crucial shift. Digital platforms can support personalized learning, peer collaboration, and access to authentic academic resources (Li & Cummins, 2021). The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) tools—such as automated writing feedback systems, corpus-based concordancers, and plagiarism detection software—offers new possibilities for individualized instruction. However, pedagogy must guide students to use these tools critically, avoiding overreliance while recognizing their potential for learning.

Finally, EAP pedagogy must incorporate inclusive and culturally responsive practices. Recognizing the diverse backgrounds of learners, teachers should create spaces where multiple rhetorical traditions and linguistic repertoires are acknowledged as resources rather than deficits (Canagarajah, 2022). This shift challenges the hegemony of Anglophone academic norms and promotes more equitable participation in global scholarship.

### **Policy Implications for Higher Education**

The rethinking of EAP cannot be confined to classroom practices alone; it also requires systemic changes in institutional and educational policy. Universities must recognize EAP as a core academic function rather than a remedial service. This recognition should be reflected in adequate funding, staffing, and institutional support for EAP programs (Hyland, 2019).

Policies should also encourage interdisciplinary collaboration between language specialists and disciplinary faculty. Joint curriculum development and co-teaching.

### **Pedagogical Practices in English for Academic Purposes**

If curriculum provides the framework for what is taught in English for Academic Purposes (EAP), pedagogy determines how it is enacted in the classroom. The teaching of EAP has undergone significant evolution, moving from traditional,



teacher-centered instruction toward more interactive, learner-centered, and technology-enhanced approaches. Effective pedagogy in EAP not only transmits linguistic knowledge but also fosters critical thinking, learner autonomy, and engagement with disciplinary discourses. This section discusses key pedagogical practices shaping EAP today, including task-based learning, collaborative learning, corpus-informed teaching, technology-enhanced instruction, and critical pedagogy.

### **Synthesis of Pedagogical Approaches**

The pedagogical practices discussed—task-based learning, collaboration, corpus-informed teaching, technology-enhanced instruction, and critical pedagogy—are not mutually exclusive. In fact, effective EAP pedagogy often blends these approaches to meet diverse learner needs. For example, a course might integrate corpus analysis into a collaborative writing project, supported by digital tools and framed within a critical discussion of disciplinary conventions.

Such integrated pedagogy reflects the complexity of academic communication and prepares learners for the realities of higher education and research. Ultimately, rethinking EAP pedagogy involves moving beyond one-size-fits-all methods to embrace flexibility, inclusivity, and innovations.

### **Challenges in Current EAP Practices**

Despite the advances in curriculum design and pedagogy, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) continues to face a number of persistent challenges that limit its effectiveness in higher education contexts. These challenges reflect not only pedagogical and institutional issues but also broader sociolinguistic and political dynamics. Understanding these obstacles is crucial for rethinking EAP in ways that are equitable, inclusive, and sustainable. Key challenges include teacher training and assessment literacy, student diversity and motivation, resource limitations, and tensions between global standards and local needs.

### **Teacher Training and Assessment Literacy**

One of the most widely acknowledged

challenges in EAP is the limited preparation of teachers. Many instructors come from general English language teaching (ELT) backgrounds and may lack specialized training in academic discourse, disciplinary conventions, or assessment practices (Hyland & Shaw, 2016). As a result, they often rely on generic teaching methods that fail to address the complex demands of academic literacy.

Assessment literacy is a particularly pressing issue. EAP instructors are frequently tasked with evaluating learners' academic writing, presentations, and research projects, yet many lack formal training in designing valid and reliable assessments (Fulcher, 2019). Without this expertise, assessment risks being inconsistent, overly focused on surface-level accuracy, or misaligned with learners' actual needs. Lee (2020) stresses that teacher development in assessment literacy is essential for ensuring that feedback and grading practices genuinely support student learning.

Professional development opportunities, however, are often limited due to institutional resource constraints. Teachers may have little access to training in genre analysis, corpus linguistics, or technology-enhanced instruction, which are increasingly necessary for modern EAP. Consequently, the gap between theoretical advances in the field and classroom practice remains wide.

### **Student Diversity and Motivation**

EAP classrooms are often highly diverse, bringing together learners from different linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds. While this diversity enriches the learning environment, it also poses challenges for curriculum and pedagogy. Students vary not only in their proficiency levels but also in their prior exposure to academic conventions, expectations of teacher-student relationships, and learning strategies (Jenkins & Mauranen, 2019).

For example, students from educational traditions that emphasize rote memorization may struggle with the critical thinking and

argumentation skills required in Western-style academia. Similarly, learners accustomed to indirect rhetorical styles may find it difficult to adapt to the linear and explicit argument structures common in English academic writing (Wingate, 2018). Teachers must navigate these differences carefully, avoiding deficit perspectives while still helping students meet institutional expectations.

Motivation is another concern. Many students view EAP as a gate-keeping requirement rather than an integral part of their academic development. This perception can result in disengagement, particularly when curricula are perceived as irrelevant or overly remedial (Hyland, 2019). Addressing motivation requires making explicit connections between EAP activities and learners' disciplinary goals, as well as fostering learner autonomy through engaging and meaningful tasks.

### **Resource Constraints**

Resource limitations also hinder the effectiveness of EAP programs, especially in non-Anglophone contexts where English is not the primary medium of instruction. Many institutions lack adequate funding for specialized EAP courses, modern learning technologies, or access to academic corpora and databases (Flowerdew & Wang, 2016). Large class sizes further restrict opportunities for individualized feedback and active learning.

Moreover, EAP is sometimes marginalized within universities, regarded as a remedial service rather than a core academic function. This institutional positioning often results in limited recognition, funding, and status for EAP teachers (Benesch, 2020). Such conditions undermine the potential for innovative curriculum and pedagogy, perpetuating reliance on outdated skills-based models.

The lack of collaboration between language specialists and disciplinary faculty is another resource-related challenge. Without institutional structures that encourage interdisciplinary partnerships, EAP risks being disconnected from the academic practices it is meant to support.

### **Global Standards vs. Local Needs**

Perhaps the most complex challenge in EAP is balancing global academic standards with local linguistic and cultural realities. English dominates as the lingua franca of research and higher education, shaping curricula, pedagogy, and assessment practices worldwide (Hyland & Jiang, 2021). While this dominance facilitates international communication, it also reinforces inequalities by privileging native English norms and marginalizing other epistemologies (Canagarajah, 2022).

In many contexts, students are expected to conform to Anglo-American rhetorical and publishing conventions, even when these clash with their cultural or disciplinary traditions. This raises concerns about linguistic imperialism and epistemic injustice (Lillis & Curry, 2018). For instance, African or Asian students may find that their rhetorical preferences—such as circular argumentation or deference to authority—are undervalued in Anglophone academic writing.

EAP teachers and curriculum designers must therefore grapple with a paradox: how to prepare students for success in global academia while also respecting and integrating local identities and traditions. Critical EAP approaches attempt to address this by encouraging learners to reflect on power dynamics and develop strategies for negotiating multiple academic cultures (Benesch, 2020). However, implementing such approaches requires institutional support, which is often Sustainability and Global Academic Mobility.

The sustainability of EAP in the 21st century depends on its ability to respond to global trends in academic mobility and knowledge exchange. Increasing numbers of students are pursuing education abroad, particularly in Anglophone countries, while others participate in transnational programs delivered in English (Jenkins & Mauranen, 2019). These developments heighten the demand for EAP instruction that prepares learners for diverse and fluid academic environments.

To be sustainable, EAP must also embrace

lifelong learning. Academic literacy is not a one-time achievement but an ongoing process of adapting to new genres, technologies, and disciplinary practices (Basturkmen, 2020). EAP curricula should therefore cultivate skills such as critical reading, self-regulated learning, and adaptability, which enable learners to continue developing their academic competencies beyond the classroom.

Sustainability further requires attention to teacher development. Institutions must invest in continuous professional development to ensure that EAP instructors remain abreast of theoretical advances, technological innovations, and pedagogical best practices (O'Sullivan, 2022). Without this investment, the gap between research and classroom practice will persist, undermining the long-term impact of EAP.

Finally, EAP must contribute to the broader goal of global academic sustainability by fostering equitable participation in knowledge production. This involves not only preparing students for success in Anglophone contexts but also valuing and integrating local knowledge systems and linguistic traditions. By promoting multilingual and intercultural academic literacies, EAP can play a role in building a more inclusive global academy.

### **Synthesis**

Rethinking EAP for the 21st century involves more than minor adjustments to curricula or pedagogy. It requires a paradigm shift that repositions EAP as an essential, interdisciplinary, and globally relevant field. By innovating curricula, embracing learner-centered pedagogy, reforming institutional policies, and promoting sustainability, EAP can move beyond its traditional gate-keeping role to become a catalyst for equitable access to global knowledge.

### **Conclusion**

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) has emerged as a cornerstone of academic success in the 21st century, particularly in contexts where English serves as the medium of instruction, research dissemination, and global knowledge

exchange. As this paper has demonstrated, the field of EAP is no longer adequately served by narrow, skills-based approaches that emphasize grammar, vocabulary, and study techniques in isolation. Instead, the realities of globalized higher education, digital transformation, and academic mobility necessitate a rethinking of both curriculum design and pedagogical practices.

The paper has also emphasized the institutional and policy dimensions of EAP. Without adequate institutional recognition, funding, and support, innovations in curriculum and pedagogy are unlikely to be sustainable. Universities and higher education policymakers must therefore position EAP as integral to academic development, fostering collaboration between language specialists and disciplinary faculty. Policies should also address global inequities in academic publishing and research by valuing multilingualism and local knowledge production, thereby promoting more equitable participation in global scholarship.

Another critical conclusion is that sustainability in EAP requires attention to lifelong learning and teacher development. Academic literacy is not a finite goal but a continual process of adapting to new communicative practices. EAP programs should, therefore, instill in learners the capacity for ongoing self-directed development. At the same time, institutions must invest in the continuous professional development of EAP teachers, ensuring that they are equipped to integrate theoretical advances, pedagogical innovations, and technological tools into their teaching.

Ultimately, rethinking EAP in the 21st century is not a matter of incremental change but a paradigm shift. It involves repositioning EAP as a central driver of academic success, equity, and sustainability in global higher education. This requires a holistic vision that connects curriculum, pedagogy, policy, and practice, while also being attentive to the diverse needs of students and the structural inequalities of global academia.

As the future of higher education becomes increasingly transnational and digital, the importance of EAP will only grow if EAP has the potential to move beyond its traditional role as a gate keeping mechanism to become a catalyst for inclusive knowledge production and equitable access to global academic communities. In doing so, EAP can contribute not only to individual student success but also to the broader project of building a more just and sustainable global academy.

### Recommendations

Education policy makers and Curriculum designers should design the curriculum to be dynamic, flexible, and interdisciplinary. An innovative EAP curriculum must therefore be modular, allowing for customization that reflects disciplinary discourse practices, and it should integrate critical and digital literacies alongside linguistic competence. By embedding multimodal and technology-enhanced literacies,

EAP programs can better equip learners to engage with contemporary academic genres and platforms.

Pedagogical practices should have transformative features, such as: Learner-centered, task-based, and collaborative pedagogies that offer greater potential for preparing students to participate actively in academic communities. Such approaches encourage autonomy, problem-solving, and critical engagement—skills that are central to both academic and professional contexts.

At the same time, pedagogy must remain inclusive and culturally responsive, acknowledging the diverse linguistic repertoires students bring with them. This inclusive stance not only supports learner identity but also challenges the dominance of narrowly defined Anglophone academic norms.

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