

2009

# EAP essentials: a teachers guide to principles and practice

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## Publication details

pre-print of: Ashton-Hay, S 2009, 'EAP essentials: a teachers guide to principles and practice', *TESOL in Context*, vol. 19, no. 2, pp. 67-69.

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## **EAP Essentials: A teacher's guide to principles and practice**

*Olwyn Alexander, Sue Argent and Jenifer Spencer*

Garnet Publishing Ltd., 2008, ISBN 978-1-85964-419-5 (pbk; 379 pp + CD)

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Ancient scholars once journeyed across the Alps to study Italian law while some sailed the Mediterranean to learn Greek philosophy or examine Arabic scripts on science, medicine and mathematics. Devotees of philosophical and religious thought migrated to the Orient in search of transcendental wisdom. Today, the quest for knowledge has not changed as English-medium universities experience an unprecedented internationalisation. This book is a publication for such a time as this. The authors invite readers to “join the tribe” (Becher 1989) and learn the specific academic discourse and culture of English for Academic Purposes (EAP).

*EAP Essentials* aims to bridge the gap between theory and the classroom by linking best practice with current literature. It succeeds in achieving this goal quite well. Ten dedicated chapters hone in on the context of EAP, text analysis, course design, vocabulary, critical thinking, student autonomy, and assessment. They also explore each macro skill with practical and accessible detail. Rather than neglecting the language of academic purposes (Hyland, 2006; Turner, 2004) or simply relegating EAP as a study skill, each chapter emphasizes rigorous language analysis. Various task types are compared, case studies involving typical student errors are discussed and a myriad of tips is offered for reflection. The scope is broad and deep, suitable for specialists or fresh EAP aspirants.

In fact, readers are bluntly reminded that international students may never have another English teacher after EAP, thus underscoring the importance of autonomous learning skills (Field, 2007; Jordan 1997). The authors also suggest that making the transition to EAP teaching is not straightforward because of the need for induction into this specialized domain. With few EAP handbooks or training courses available, this publication serves as an experienced teaching companion and supportive guide.

One of the most engaging parts of the book is the multitude of case studies to enhance reflective practice. Relevant cases feature some of the most challenging aspects of teaching EAP. For example, the writing chapter features an excerpt from a student essay followed by a sample student-teacher conference. The case study dialogue demonstrates a protocol where the teacher acts as a questioning reader in some confusing sections of the student's text. The protocol serves to clarify and redirect the student's intended meaning using a progressive and productive pedagogical approach instead of only focusing on grammatical errors. Such examples reinforce the welcome presence of best practice throughout the book.

The accompanying CD hosts a challenging cache of tried and tested skills-based language activities linked to key concepts in each chapter. The materials may require some adaptation to suit an Australian context; however the pages on synthesizing reference sources were useful for my own students. The task materials promote active collaboration and double-loop learning where "reflective dialogue begins the journey to greater agency, autonomy and independence rather than remaining dependent and passive" (Brockbank and McGill 1998, p. 43-44).

*EAP Essentials* delivers the fundamentals of language analysis for teaching the academic skills that students need most. This book is highly recommended as a valuable resource for a wide audience: teachers who are preparing international

students for academic study, EAP teacher trainers and inexperienced or trainee teachers hoping to teach academic English. Readers will indeed join the tribe with strategic awareness of recent literature coupled with best practice and innovative resource materials. The CD alone is well worth the cost of the book but better still are the signposts for steering students through uncharted academic territories on the expedition toward learning autonomy, independence, and greater self efficacy.

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