

**Bitchener, J., Storch, N., and Wette, R. (eds.) (2017) *Teaching Writing for Academic Purposes to Multilingual Students: Instructional Approaches*. Routledge**

### **Reviewed by Tracey Costley**

Overall, this edited book is a must-read for anyone working in the area of academic language and literacy development, EAP course planning and, more generally, activities around teaching and supporting academic writing. One of the stand-out features that makes the book so useful for teachers, as well as course designers and curriculum planners, is the approachable, open and honest stance each author takes in their discussions of what they do, (as well as) how and why - whether at the level of course design and implementation or classroom practice.

The book comprises four parts. Parts I and II provide accounts of a broad range of approaches and practices towards supporting L2 learners' academic writing development in and across different teaching and learning contexts. Parts III and IV attend to some of the possible future directions research in the field of academic writing may take, as well as providing an overview of how the authors' contributions feed into these future directions.

### **Part I: EAP Courses in university Degree Programs Chapters 1,2,3 by Paltridge, Hyland, and Silva**

The book begins with a helpful outline of the role of context in the teaching of academic writing and how theory and practice can, and should, come together in course design, by Paltridge. This thoughtful and engaging account provides a clear backdrop for the two subsequent chapters in Part I from Hyland and Silva. In his chapter, Hyland takes the reader through the design and development of a large-scale academic writing programme in Hong Kong, responding to changes in policy that require all students to engage in compulsory academic skills and language classes. Silva details his experiences of similarly large programmes in the US. What stands out about both of these chapters - particularly Silva's - is the honesty and candidness with which these colleagues describe their experiences of designing and implementing these courses, as well as the challenges and obstacles of getting buy-in to such courses from both students and staff. All three chapters offer a rich and detailed discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of their courses as well the day-to-day details of what operationalizing theory-in-practice looks like.

### **Part II: Instruction in specific EAP Knowledge and Skills**

Part II moves from the more macro level of programme design to classroom practice and is divided into three loosely linked parts. The first is *Academic Genre-Based Instruction* with three chapters by Tardy; Bitchener, and Wette. The second part is titled *Instructional Tasks and Activities*, with contributions from

Hammond in Chapter 8 and Storch in Chapter 9. Part III is *Approaches to Academic Language Development* with chapters by Ferris and Lee.

The more practice-oriented Part II begins with Tardy's discussion of how teachers are able, or not, to implement genre pedagogy in undergraduate writing classes. Tardy, argues that there is a real need for teachers to have knowledge of genre theories and questions whether this is knowledge that novice teachers are provided within current teacher training. Through her study she explores the role of reflection and mindfulness in teachers' practice and the importance of these practices in empowering teachers to adapt ideas and approaches for their own contexts. Moving from the role of genre pedagogy in teacher training to genre pedagogy in practice, Bitchener proposes a 7-stage pedagogical approach for helping students to create an argument across different academic genres. His chapter provides a useful discussion of the complexity involved in developing an argument and the manifold ways in which it plays out in and across different disciplines. In Chapter 7, Wette focuses on the goal and challenge of helping inexperienced L2 writers to make effective use of sources within their writing. She reminds us that

*"writing using sources is a complex, multi-faceted, academic literacy skill set with a number of technical, linguistic, rhetorical, disciplinary and cultural elements. Expertise requires proficiency in comprehending and transforming source text materials, as well as the ability to create an original text that builds on previous published knowledge"* (Wette, p. 101).

As with the two other chapters, Wette's chapter is not restricted to a solely theoretical discussion of source use but also provides practical examples of suggested instructional tasks and activities to enable colleagues to see these ideas in practice.

In Chapter 8 Hammond shifts the focus away from University/College students to a focus on secondary schools and the role of literate talk in developing English as Additional Language (EAL) learners' scientific academic writing. Hammond argues that successfully supporting students' writing development is more successful when students are provided *"with opportunities to engage in deep learning; and that include opportunities for in-depth and sustained talk about that learning"* (p. 127). Storch continues this focus on instructional activities in Chapter 9 by looking at collaborative writing and EAP. She explores the challenges of developing writers, particularly with regard to workplace communication, and readying students for writing effectively in these contexts. The chapter argues that successful collaborative writing tasks do more than simply get students to write together. Meaningful collaborative tasks are carefully designed, and require students to engage in *'meaning-focused'* writing as well as *'language-focused'* writing. She also highlights the task and role that require students to work co-operatively as well as collaboratively.

In Ferris and Lee's chapters, the cycle of moving from macro to micro is completed. The chapter explores three principles for promoting academic language development; the *why*, *what* and *how*. In her chapter, Ferris explores the question of how we attend to language in our classes and seeks to

*“provide teachers with practical strategies for addressing language with their EAP students in ways that are authentic and fully integrated with other class goals and activities so that students can be prepared to communicate successfully for academic purposes” (p. 146).*

Lee’s chapter focuses on feedback and the important questions of how we can make it more responsive to students’ needs, central to their development and progress, as well as being something that is manageable for busy teachers. Lee argues that we need a *principled approach* and provides a detailed outline of what this might look like and suggests strategies for both teachers and students.

### **Part III Future Research in EAP (Manchón) and Part IV Epilogue (Pearson Casanave)**

Manchón’s chapter situates the book (and its contributions) within a broader research context. The chapter explores some of the different ways in which the interaction between language and L2 writing has been taken up in recent research. The chapter discusses language as an essential building block in academic literacies, and discusses work that has approached this from a psycholinguistic as well as a socio-cultural perspective as well as looking at how these lenses inform our understanding of the writing process. The book draws to a close with Pearson Casanave’s epilogue. Disregarding an unfortunate typo with the book’s name, the chapter provides a thoughtful summary of the text and what and how it contributes to our understanding of academic writing. Pearson Casanave captures a fundamental contribution of the text in highlighting how the activities and practices it details,

*“form networks or systems of tasks rather than consisting of isolated exercises /.../ the tasks, activities and projects take on a holistic sense of purpose that allow us to envision what might happen during an entire term in an EAP class” (p. 207).*

### **Final comments**

This ambitious book is not held together through the presentation of a common concept of academic writing or a common approach to course design and delivery, or even a consistent group of learners. Rather the powerful thing that draws this book together is the honest sharing of theories, ideas and practices. We do not, after all, work in identical contexts and nor do we all agree on what is or is not good pedagogy or effective course design. It is this honesty and recognition (whether explicit or not) of the range of practices that enables the book to speak to a broad audience, inviting us to reflect on our own contexts and practices. For me, the most standout feature of book is the openness of the discussions provided by each of the contributing authors. The chapters are generously full of detailed examples, frameworks, practical suggestions and activities for practitioners to take up and contextualise for use in their own teaching and learning situations. Often texts such as this are either very theoretical or very practical, but each of the chapters in this book navigates this path well to provide a balanced account of theory and practice. The honesty and generosity of the book are quite rare and this is something that makes *Teaching Writing for Academic Purposes to Multilingual Students: Instructional Approaches* refreshing to read.