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Introduction

We begin this book by sharing a few commonly held beliefs about academic English. We have heard students say that academic English is a "harder" or "better" version of English, and that they feel intimidated by it. We have also heard students say that they want to learn "long fancy words," which they believe are valued in academic language. Some students have said that they had to achieve a particular score on an English entrance exam, which they felt was more important than going to their English classes. And in writing courses, other students have stated that they did not feel like they had anything valuable to contribute to scholarly dialogue, saying, "I haven't published, so I have nothing new to say."

False beliefs about academic English prevail, and you may have heard others that we have not mentioned. But why do students feel that mastering academic English is difficult? Is it really so different from other types of English? In the chapters that follow, we hope to present academic English as a particular type of English that is not necessarily "better," "fancier," or "harder"; rather, it is simply a different *kind* of English. It is a kind of English that is usually learned in scholastic settings after general English has been acquired. We prefer to think of learning academic language as developing a set of skills that can be honed with practice, effective instruction, and motivation.

What Is EAP?

English for academic purposes (EAP) shares many common elements with English language teaching that occurs in other settings and in its parent field, English for specific purposes (ESP). However, the main distinguishing factor among these is that the pedagogical agenda of EAP is focused specifically on the formal teaching and learning of academic language. As a result, EAP scholarship includes pedagogical materials and design, classroom and academic discourse, academic genres, and teaching and administration in academic settings. Students in EAP settings typically have very specific goals for themselves, such as obtaining a university degree, and are highly motivated to achieve them.

The field of EAP has blossomed over the past two decades, largely due to the increase in students studying at English-medium universities, as well as the increase of English in scholarly publication, though not without controversy (for more on this topic, see Canagarajah, 1999). A wide variety of teaching materials and research related to the teaching and learning of academic English now exists, which has spurred a greater need for trained EAP teachers. We should note, however, that while EAP primarily focuses on students in secondary and postsecondary settings, scholarship in EAP also addresses the needs of older children and immigrants, who can benefit from specific academic instruction to facilitate their entrance into an English-dominant academic system (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002).

Our Approach to Teaching EAP

Because our readers may teach in varying settings across the world, we aim to present an approach to teaching EAP that can be adapted to a wide range of postsecondary academic settings, including community colleges, intensive English programs at universities, private language centers, and tutoring programs. We have also aimed to address both language and academic skills. Because English instructors typically have a limited amount of time to prepare students for academic study, they must ensure that they teach both academic English and academic learning. We believe that if teachers can nurture independent learners, students can succeed far beyond the walls of our EAP classrooms.

It is also important for EAP teachers to remember that they are preparing students to participate in a broader academic culture. The American linguist Swales (1990) has used the term "discourse community" to refer to a group of people who share goals, ways of communication and thinking, and social practices. EAP teachers should aim to help English language learners become active members of the academic community in which they are studying. In other words, students are not just learning academic English; they are learning to think like academics and become academics. In addition, if students are studying in a setting that is culturally very different from their native culture, or if they are attending an English-medium university in a country that has different academic expectations than their own, students would greatly benefit from an orientation to the academic culture in which they are studying. As you will see, a recurring theme in this book focuses on making academic practices as salient and accessible for students as possible.

REFLECTIVE BREAK

Think about the academic community in which you work, teach, or study.

- What is the role of language in unifying people in your academic community?

- What is expected of members in this community?

In This Book

In Chapters 2 and 3, we lay the foundation for teaching EAP; Chapter 2 discusses needs assessment, and Chapter 3 outlines general academic skills. In Chapter 4, we discuss academic reading and writing as interconnected processes, and we home in on listening and speaking skills in Chapter 5. In Chapter 6, we illustrate how grammar and vocabulary are intertwined with all four skills, and present examples of two "blended" skills that combine reading, writing, listening, speaking, grammar, and vocabulary. Finally, Chapter 7 emphasizes the importance of reflective practice and continual professional development. As you read, we hope you allow time to use the reflection questions to stimulate your thinking and help you envision how the ideas we discuss may be applicable to the academic setting in which you teach and learn.