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English for Academic Purposes:  
Practical and Theoretical Approaches  
REAL Studies 7

Edited by Christoph Haase & Josef Schmied

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## PREFACE

This volume represents the final outgrowth of the confluence of two methodological strands: the study of academic writing in a Central European context on the one hand and the dialogue that was enabled through the activities within the project framework of Saxon - Czech university cooperation on the other.

The volume has a tripartite, top-down structure that considers the problems and obvious shortcomings of the field, at first from a theoretical, then from an applied perspective. We thus begin with considerations more at home in the methodology of science and epistemology, move toward applications with empirical studies and finally observe trends in putting this into practice in teaching.

The major questions raised by the theory of academic writing have been around for a while: they have revolved around stylistic features and text-linguistic considerations, best-example practice and coherence-building manuals. Most authors in this volume, however, have also practised academic writing in their own related or occasionally unrelated research and their individual publication history and practice. The picture emerging from this is therefore necessarily a heterogeneous one but one that undergoes sequential refinement in the course of the volume. The first part sketches in broad strokes the status and position of academic writing, its epistemological impact and pathways to application.

The contribution by Haase explores the theoretical possibilities of language and the possible and probable mappings onto abstract argumentation structure by discussing the SPACE corpus and by tracking the major results of five years of study within SPACE.

The article by Schmied concerns paradigm shifts in the study of EAP and changing conventions in the practice of academic writing. It combines a discussion of modern key concepts with concrete guidelines for academic novices.

Bennett describes the expansion of English as a “lingua franca for the communication of knowledge” (Bennett, this volume) but branches out into the styles of the discourse of academics with LOTE, thus employing a critical methodological viewpoint.

In the empirical section, the work of linguists based mainly at Czech institutions provides a look at all levels of linguistic description. The level of syntax is addressed in Tuma and Lengal’s look at student writing complexity, especially markers of coordination and subordination. The study further demonstrates how these markers can be found in a learner corpus.

Beyer investigates semantic functions of hedges in the writings of native and non-native speakers in a tight corpus study concerning epistemic adverbs like *probably* and *possibly*.

The text level is the focus of Vogel's study, mainly using a descriptive background that lends its categories from Quirk et al. (1985) and Biber et al. (1999). This study backs up Beyer's in that the use and overuse of similar items is explored.

Malá suggests a register and subregister classification of academic texts in a diachronic perspective and refines this by providing a clause substitution/contribution hierarchy. Her findings include a tendency towards more condensed non-finite verbal forms.

The discourse level is explored in Smirnova's study of argumentative patterns mainly by Russian scholars writing in English. Her qualitative approach is appended by preliminary data on the frequency distribution of different argument types and the empirical bias of the writers.

In the first contribution in part 3, Dontcheva-Navratilová, Jančařicová and Povolná provide a bridge from the empirical section to the section on teaching. Their claim is that syllabus-based teaching raises student awareness towards specific (instead of just general) writing skills and argumentation.

Voigt investigates the relevance and extent of English for German childcare givers, called English for child-rearing purposes (ECRP). This article provides an excellent overview of the various requirements of a course specifically designed for the stated purpose.

Hinner's paper on the replacement of classical Business English in favour of communicative approaches highlights in a case study of the TU Freiberg the changing face of the English curricula in business programmes at German universities.

A similar target group is described in Orlova's look at the use of a portfolio to guide the self-reflecting abilities of pre-service teachers in her chapter on the EPOSTL, the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages.

As with previous volumes, we see also this volume as an example of culture-specific writing itself; therefore, we have refrained from "harmonizing" the whole by changing the personal style of individual authors. Unfortunately, the volume is too small for a comparative study of European writing but maybe it still shows some interesting differences in structure, argumentation and, of course, idiomaticity that go beyond individual writers. We hope to continue this challenging discourse in this series.

Overall, the contributions once again show the integrative force of academic endeavour and their effects on the distribution and patterning of linguistic features and growing awareness for methodological standards.

For help with the editorial work we would like to thank Cornelia Neubert (Chemnitz) and for the STHI network coordination Ilona Scherm.

## ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES:

### CONTRASTIVE PERSPECTIVES IN THE CURRICULUM<sup>1</sup>

Josef Schmied

Chemnitz University of Technology

This contribution introduces a survey of the current discussion about teaching English for Academic Purposes at English Departments in Europe. It focuses on the key concepts but it also illustrates possible examples from my own teaching experience at BA and MA level for advanced German users of English. It further focuses on the controversies of choices in teaching English for Academic Purposes that may illustrate the development of the subject in the 21st century. Most of the theoretical debates and practical examples are from academic writing. I would like to demonstrate that academic writing must be based in a safe context of academic reading and that an applied linguistic approach is a suitable basis even for non-linguists.

#### Introduction to key principles

Paradigm shift: from art to craft?

Traditionally, language skills at (German) universities were taught by native speakers, who would lead their students' learning by rules and their *Sprachgefühl* (intuitions): students had to memorize and apply the former and develop the latter, probably through exposure and immersion. For many students, the general advice "more reading" was not very helpful and their only opportunity to develop advanced skills was their year or semester abroad. Unfortunately, few structured teaching materials were available for advanced learners (level C in the "European Reference Frame for Languages") and the text-based individual instruction used terms like more "clear", "concise", "elegant" or "natural", which were not really accessible for students, let alone verifiable or falsifiable in objective terms. The problem with "clarity" is that it may refer to lexical choice, to complex syntax, or to overall argumentation structure. The problem with "concision" is that it can be achieved by eliminating irrelevancies and compressing information in fewer words, but this may be prevented by lack of specialised vocabulary, love of verbose style or certain expressions, and lack of syntagmatic flexibility (to avoid interfering mother-tongue style, for instance). "Elegance" is a particularly elusive concept and many critics argue it is impossible to achieve for non-native writers – thus overlapping with "naturalness". All these

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<sup>1</sup> This contribution is based on the joint research with various Czech partners, especially in Brno and Usti. I also wish to thank our comparative partners in Italy, Spain and Turkey and my constant discussion partners at Chemnitz University.

"explanations" might lead students to think that academic writing is essentially an art that requires talent and few might be sufficiently gifted; unfortunately, all of them still need to write academic English. This line of thinking, however, is only one of many misconceptions: since there are no native speakers, let alone native writers, of academic English, it has to be learnt by everyone and many best practice examples show that it is learnable, so it must also be teachable.

If we try to grasp the fuzzy concepts used above to describe good academic English and express them in hard linguistic terms, this may imply collocations and metaphors, which are difficult to express but possibly approachable in usage analyses of model texts and model text-collections of the discourse community. Of course, it may be hard work to change an art into a craft, but it may be more teachable.

Since few of the afore-mentioned native speakers had undergone explicit training in academic writing at proficiency level and had published few research articles or academic research texts themselves, students at near-native speaker level (proficiency, C1) even felt that teachers abused their position of power to impose inconsistent and idiosyncratic requirements (Lea/Street 2000).

Since the beginning of the century, however, a paradigm shift (e.g. Swales/Feak<sup>3</sup> 2012 or Schmied 2011) has changed the perception radically: from experts to discourse community, from text-based to readership-oriented and from art to craft. As part of the adaptation of European universities to the Bologna model, "Teaching Academic Writing in European Higher Education" (the title of a book edited by Björg/Bräuer/Leinecker/Jørgensen in 2003) has moved from the periphery into the basic modules of the new BA and MA programmes, even for native speakers. This is not only because more students (with less writing talent?) attend European universities today, but also because conventions become "harder" in disciplines and less "creative style" is tolerated.

From a positive perspective, this provided many new teaching and research options for applied linguists in mother-tongue and foreign-language traditions. In Germany, for instance, a *Schreibzentrum* or *Schreibwerkstatt* was set up at many universities; this is not only an import of US traditions, but also shows the diversification of genres and intensification of advanced skills. The analysis of academic genres in comparison of languages (such as German and English) and status (such as native vs. non-native) was a necessary basis for the new teaching modules. A DAAD-Lektorenarbeitsgruppe (2009) summarised all aspects of science communication for the teaching of German at Italian universities. This clearly demonstrates that the expansion of academic text production is not restricted to English, but contributes to multilingualism in Europe. Today there is even a European Association for the Teaching of Academic Writing (EATAW), which presents itself on its webpage (<http://www.eataw.eu/> on 12/05/12) as:

EATAW is a scholarly forum which seeks to bring together those involved or interested in the teaching, tutoring, research, administration and development of academic writing in higher education in Europe. Its aims include:

- Connecting teachers and scholars of academic writing through conferences, publications, newsletters, forums and other means
- Raising awareness, both among university administrators and lecturers in other disciplines, as well as among the general public, of the importance of teaching academic writing
- Developing European scholarship in the field of academic writing by initiating research and bringing researchers together for joint projects
- Initiating projects to exchange experience and know-how on the teaching of writing, on writing programs and writing centres
- Organising continuing education for writing teachers
- Defining and securing quality standards in teaching, tutoring and researching writing and persuading institutions and administrators of the value of these standards
- Connecting the teaching of academic writing with adjacent fields such as foreign languages, argumentation and rhetoric, professional writing, science communication, pedagogy, university teaching and other fields.
- While the language of communication of the organisation is English, EATAW strives to promote and support good scholarship and practice for the teaching of academic writing in any European language.

Again, the focus here is on the lingua franca English, but other languages can be included. There is enough work for all the specialists interested in improving academic language and discourse. This work is facilitated today by new “Guides for Advanced Learners” (subtitle) such as the following, which emphasises a new spirit and writer-reader relationship:

The assumption throughout is that a reader who has insight into language, and more specifically into the interplay between function and form, will be able to make the right choices at any particular juncture in a text. ...

We base all our observations on authentic student and native-speaker texts from various sources, some of them electronic, and we draw on a wide range of research literature, some of which deals with cross-linguistic and cross-cultural difference. We are confident that this corpus-driven approach has allowed us to describe deviation and error in student’s interlanguage with greater precision than is the case in textbooks which are aimed at a more general audience. In this sense, the present book will be helpful not only to non-native writers, but also to native editors struggling to correct fully formulated texts submitted by German-speaking authors. (Siepmann et al. 2011: 3)

Rather than just expecting you to take this information on trust, however, we have provided instances of good writing that exemplify our precepts and have always tried to explain their underlying rationale. We have also asked you to accept that writing is a creative business and that it is impossible to give hard and fast rules for every imaginable writing situation. Our hope is that by helping you to understand why

certain drawbacks, we have prepared you to make your own independent intelligent decisions as a writer. (ibid: 458)

These explanations indicate a new style of teaching academic writing, in which the learner is accepted as a learning partner by the writing expert. The expert does not instruct in the traditional sense, but seeks to convince by principles and examples and finally leaves the learners the choice which conventions they want to follow.

### Focus on the reader

The focus of the new approach to English for Academic Purposes, in particular for academic writing is the reader: writers should always bear their readers in mind, try to attract their attention and keep them interested throughout their text. An important initial point to attract the attention of the reader is the title for a BA thesis, for instance.

#### *Catchy titles to attract the reader?*

Titles perform two functions: they evoke the context within which a term paper has been written; and they announce the specific topic that will be dealt with. It is therefore a good idea to ensure that your title contains two elements, one corresponding to each of these functions. We will call the former the Frame (the general area to be dealt with) and the latter the Theme (the sub-area you will be focusing on). The reader's interest is awakened by the Frame; it is stimulated by the Theme.

An effective way of structuring titles is to begin with the Frame, followed by the Theme as a subtitle, with these two elements separated by a colon (:). Here are two examples (the full texts are available on the internet, but not relevant here):

Provocative and Unforgettable: Peter Carey's Short Fiction

Hedges: A Study in Meaning and the Logic of Fuzzy Concepts

#### *Reader-focused editing to minimise the risk of misunderstanding?*

Focusing on the reader is particularly important in the final editing process. The purpose of editing is to revise a pre-final draft, to make work easy for the reader and to minimise the chances of misunderstanding. Many inexperienced writers, even those who accept the necessity of editing in principle, find it very difficult to go critically through their own work from a reader perspective. Siepmann et al. (2011: 76) even write: "You may well feel that hacking away at the text you have produced in the sweat of your brow is almost like cutting into your own flesh."

Writing has to be seen as including several logical stages. Not surprisingly, it always takes a long time: initially, writers may need a more or less planned creative, almost brainstorming phase; next they have the opportunity to work out complex thoughts in considerable detail; then they have to check whether the potentially unnecessary

complexity makes the reading work too difficult and complexity has to be reduced on word, sentence and text level; and finally, all surface problems have to be solved in formal proof-reading. At word level, redundancies or even tautologies have to be removed. At sentence level, idiomaticity has to be ensured and parallel constructions scrutinised as to whether they add unnecessary complexity or allow faster processing. At the text level, all information packaging devices have to be considered, (exceptional) fronting in contrastive contexts, the (prototypical) principle of end-focus (Quirk et al. 1985: 1357), fore- and back-grounding in a paragraph to direct reader interpretations in information processing, even the sequence of tenses and the logical connections between clauses, etc. All these formal and functional options have to be evaluated with the readers and their guidance in mind.

*Careful punctuation to help the reader interpret?*

For many students punctuation, in particular colons and semicolons, are largely ornamental, which means they have no function or cannot make any meaningful distinctions. This opinion, however, is often falsified in humorous text examples on the internet today, which show that commas, for instance, are extremely important. This most famous examples, like “woman, without her man, is nothing” (emphasising the importance of men) and “woman: without her, man is nothing” (emphasising the importance of women), are used in Wikipedia (s.v. Punctuation on 12/05/12) to convince everyone that punctuation can lead to greatly different meanings. And "eats, shoots and leaves" (to mean "eats firstly, fires a weapon secondly, and leaves the scene thirdly") as against "eats shoots and leaves" (to mean "consumes plant growths") has even made it onto the title page of a popular book (by Lynne Truss 2003).

A functional approach to punctuation is, for instance, propagated in Greenbaum’s *Oxford English Grammar* (1996: 505; similarly in Quirk et al. 1985). The grammarian explains in his initial summary why punctuation is included in his Grammar:

There are numerous graphic displays that are unique to human communication. The conventions of punctuation reflect only crudely — if at all — the pauses and intonational patterns that occur in speech.

The present punctuation system for English was essentially in place during the second half of the seventeenth century. It is linked more to grammatical structure than to the rhythms of speech.

In our reader-oriented approach, we emphasise that the main aim of punctuation is to make the text easier to read, or to help the reader uncover the rhythm of the sentence. Thus punctuation choices are as important as the grammatical and lexical choices for effective writer – reader communication in English.

Thus if we see a comma in a particular place in a sentence and we know that its main function is to separate parts of the sentence from each other, we are asked to pay separate attention to each segment. If we punctuate a text carefully we help the reader

understand what we focus on and find important. Seen in this light, better punctuation may mean better message encoding and better communication.

However, the comma, colon and semicolon placement rules for English are markedly different from those for German, for instance in relative constructions. Whereas the importance of commas in non-restrictive relative clauses is emphasised in every English schoolbook, the use of colons and semicolons is neglected; no wonder, then, that they are underused in students' writing, despite their potential usefulness in signalling meaningful differences and facilitating interpretation by the reader.

The information to the right of a colon does not need to consist of an independent clause. In cases where it does, it may happen that the writer has capitalised the first letter of the first word of the clause following the colon, as follows:

The experiment was flawed: Design mistakes were made and cooperation between the participating companies was not as close as had been promised.

Note that this is American English rather than British English practice.

There are three basic functions for the English semicolon:

- to show that the two clauses are somehow related, as in:  
*The writer always has to be aware of reader expectations; the reader has to know about the production context of the text.*
- to separate members of a list if the elements are themselves long or complex, or if they contain commas doing other jobs, as in:  
*Avoid passive and mediopassive constructions, clichés and stereotypes, long and complex sentences; and synonyms in any case.*
- to function as a heavy form of the comma, with a position in between the comma and the full stop, the comma would be confusing because of other commas and the full-stop would break the unity of the thought:  
*If students can do it independently, they can try; and if the teachers have to support them, they will do it.*

The hierarchical relation between comma, semicolon and full stop is very clear in English, and there are many guidelines and examples on numerous web pages and usage guides. Most “rules” are based on functional criteria; few can be learnt on a formal basis. For the semicolon, for instance, it is important to bear in mind that the structure to the left of the colon is a grammatically complete independent clause; using a colon would split the verb from the object and violate the Principle of Semantic Unity.

Even the European Commission (2011: 16) has instructions in its English style guide:

2.9 Use a semicolon rather than a comma to combine two sentences into one without a linking conjunction:

The committee dealing with the question of commas agreed on a final text; however, the issue of semicolons was not considered.

You may also use semicolons instead of commas to separate items in a series, especially phrases that themselves contain commas (see also chapter 7 for the use of semicolons in lists).

Overall, writers should bear in mind that punctuation rules are different in English than in other languages and functional perspectives like reader orientation are only part of the picture (cf. p. 30 below); culture-specific conventions may be much more complex, but they have to be discussed now in the current academic lingua franca debate.

### An analytical perspective

New approaches to academic writing aim at persuading readers to adopt an analytical attitude to the task of writing; although it initially may seem to slow things down, it actually soon comes to pay dividends. The understanding that writers develop from a more conscious approach to writing gives them the confidence and control that makes them aware and proud of being proficient and effective in their communication.

Even before beginning to write, it is useful for young academic writers to conceive planning as consisting of six steps, each of which takes them a little nearer the point when they can begin to produce text in a proposed conceptualization of scientific discourse, as listed, for instance, by Pérez-Llantada (2012: 68):

1. generating the content
2. grouping and selecting points
3. establishing a perspective
4. determining an intention
5. dividing the material into sections
6. entitling sections and paragraphs

Practicing writing in such small steps may seem uncreative, but it can be practiced in class or in group work and it avoids individual writing blocks, which can easily occur when writing appears a dauntingly large task to individual authors.

## **Setting the context for English for Academic Purposes in the Curriculum**

### Teaching skills explicitly in the new curricula

If one compares teaching programmes in English departments in European universities after the so-called Bologna Reform, one notices that academic skills that used to be understood were simply expanded from what students had learned at school; or what was taught implicitly has to be taught explicitly in so-called skills modules today. They may have been taken over from Anglo-American models, but they may also be

necessary because teachers notice that certain presentation and writing skills (irrespective of related technologies) could not be taken for granted anymore. It is, of course, an oversimplification to complain that students still have to learn how to read and write, but if we take into consideration that the technological basis has expanded and has to be taught anyway, it may be justified to include explicitly today an IT component in the Bachelor's programme. This does not only include a short introduction on how to use the library catalogue and electronic journals (possibly by the librarian) but also presentation skills on the internet with a basic component of html (or php); an advanced introduction into the standard presentation techniques (including the departmental conventions in referencing (APA vs. MLA); the corporate design of PowerPoint presentations, and text processing – including the conventions of the master and style sheets described. Unfortunately, real publishing skills – for instance, how to avoid widows and orphans and the choice of appropriate fonts and layouts – are not included in most curricula even at Master's level, although this would be a very useful skill in many occupations that students of English can turn to after they have finished their university degrees.

Of course, we cannot prepare students in all disciplines, because we do not know “what tasks do professors actually require”, as Cooper/Bikowski (2007) ask. Their analysis revealed that most departments assigned library research papers and project reports, social sciences/humanities departments also article/book reviews and plans/proposals, which science or engineering departments did not want very often (ibid: 216). This leads us to the conclusion already drawn by Johns/Swales (2002: 26):

We cannot prepare students for all eventualities in academic classrooms or other situations (such as proposal defences), nor can we understand other disciplines or other pedagogical practices well enough to give our students templates for success. What we can do, across the board, is raise students' awareness, give them a variety of experiences and exposures, encourage their analyses and critique of texts and contexts, and motivate them to see the university, like all institutions, as human and constructed, rigid, fluid, hegemonous and negotiable – all at the same time.

If writing skills are (re-)integrated into the general European university teaching programme at all levels, this only brings back the components grammar, logic and rhetoric that used to be part of the universities' trivium over centuries. Of course, the new rhetoric is functional and not formal or even ornamental, it focuses on the reading process and not on the product, and it takes the reader more seriously than the writer.

### Reading skills in the EAP curriculum

Although this contribution focuses on writing in EAP, the reading component cannot be neglected, because it is the focus of the writing process (as explained above) and because practising reading skills before writing skills gives young academic writers a chance to experience for themselves how texts can be read more or less easily. This

emphasises the greater metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness of non-native readers – a great advantage for their writing awareness. Of course, there have always been very different reading skills (such as skimming and scanning) and many different approaches to reading (from more cognitive to more socio-cultural emphases), but the detailed attention to differing amounts of lexical, grammatical and discourse knowledge (cf. Grabe/Stoller<sup>2</sup> 2011) is relatively new. The special development of the non-native reader, even lingua franca users at advanced levels (cf. Mauranen 2012), in different socio-cultural contexts can be enhanced by exposure to the discipline-specific texts of various genres (cf. Swales 2004). More conscious exposure helps to build up greater experience with genre-specific expectations and this can lead to faster processing and evaluation of discipline-specific academic texts. On this basis, as trained readers, academic learners can develop their writing skills and make the right choices in the appropriate contexts.

### **Contrasts and choices in EAP approaches**

#### Native speaker vs. empirical usage

The debate on whether native speakers should teach EAP has been going on for a very long time (e.g. Hyland 2006). Of course, this also depends on the level. It goes without saying that students have to learn English well enough to discuss writing and they have to be good enough at writing in general to proceed to the most specific types of academic writing. If we look at MA level, however, the question of writing experience in academic genres becomes more crucial. Unfortunately, few European universities can offer salaries that are attractive enough to native speaker specialists and it may seem strange if the genre presentations is taught by native speakers who have never made a conference presentation themselves or when the genre research articles is taught by native speakers who have never done any empirical research either. This question is of course closely related to the question of norms: whether the native speaker is needed to set a norm by example more or less intuitively, or whether empirical usage can be taken as an objective basis if the relevant databases or corpora are detailed and accessible enough for the purpose.

#### Skills vs. community approaches

Traditionally EAP has been seen as an advanced level of study skills which were taught by native speakers in language departments. Today, a constructivist approach is often followed which sees academic literacy as advanced levels as a compromise between creative individuality and collective conventions in the specific academic community (cf. Schmied *fc*).

### Form vs. function approaches

Sadly, even advanced learners of English often want fixed guidelines or “rules”, since they conceptualise proficiency as an intricate set and subset of 100% rules. And many of the traditional style guides in book form, and even on the internet and in current text processing programmes, provide such rules. Thus, most text processing programmes do not “like it” when defining relative clauses are introduced by *which*, although the distinction between non-defining and defining relatives is by no means clear-cut and the choice of relative pronouns even less so (i.e. *that* is certainly not used 100% with defining relative constructions). Often many more style variables are involved, such as complexity and functional requirements; in particular, reader orientation makes it necessary for the teacher to emphasise that rules can be very flexible and even broken if this is well justified.

### Language contrastive approaches vs. general approaches

Today when English for academic purposes is often seen from a non-native perspective as a lingua franca at advanced levels, the contrastive emphasis on mother tongue and the native English conventions may be overemphasised. Obviously, academic language tends towards nominalisation but whether this nominalisation is more or less pronounced in English depends on the respective mother tongue. A debatable example is presented in a relatively new handbook (Siepmann et al. 2012: 2):

One reason is that nominalisation is a standard feature of academic language; this is just as true for English as for any other European language. As a result, budding academic writers who are anxious to join the academic community have no alternative but to use nominalizations in conformity with academic norms. Another reason is that the choice between a nominal and a verbal construction often depends on context. In the following sentence, for example, the noun *supersession* is clearly preferable to its verbal equivalent *supersede*, whose use would make the sentence far longer and more complex. This is because the verbs *advocate* and *expect* take different complements (e.g. *advocate that* + subjunctive, *expect that* + *will*-future):

Most of those who advocate or expect the supersession of capitalism by socialism have a strong sympathy with the idea of socialism and, indeed, call themselves socialists. (Robinson 1980: 141)

Here a straightforward, simple alternative could be:

Most of those who advocate or expect socialism to supersede capitalism have a strong sympathy with the idea of socialism and, indeed, call themselves socialists.

### Repetition vs. creativity

Understandably, many students argue that they should not be straitjacketed, and conventions vary even within the English Department: this is exemplified when in the

literature section MLA styles are used, while in the linguistics and social studies sections APA styles are preferred. The issue of creativity has to be seen under the general perspective of reader expectancy and accessibility, i.e. anything that allows the reader to process the text easily is supported except, of course, in cases where the reader is consciously stopped in order to make him or her think. It also depends on the level: probably at BA level students should adhere to standard conventions more than at MA level, when they are probably sufficiently advanced to offer some more individual achievement to the reader. It also depends on the linguistic unit: lexemes are often predetermined by the specialised terminology of the subject area and have to be discussed, defined or adapted; idiomaticity, however, is often assumed by native and non-native speakers alike, so that deviations are, maybe misleadingly, seen as meaningful and thus distract the reader from the standard message. Often higher levels of linguistic composition, such as clause and paragraph constructions, are not taught at all although the conventions cannot be taken for granted either. On the textual level, it is extremely important that increasingly the IMRAD model, which has been traditionally used in natural sciences, is expanding into the social sciences including linguistics. The sequence of “introduction”, “methodology”, “research” and “discussion” may have to be modified according to discipline and genre. In any case, academic writers should always ask themselves why what they write about is interesting or an “issue”; which “methodology” and “key concepts” fit their purposes; how their “analyses” can best be visualized in examples, tables and figures; what is still unsatisfactory at the end of their work; and how their (small) contribution can in “conclusion” be recontextualised in the current academic discourses.

### **Approaches to teaching EAP**

A rules approach to guide learners through their writing practice

In the following, I would like to go through twelve guidelines and explain the functionality behind them, so that they can be used either way: students who wish to memorise rules can use them as labels for checking whether their writing adheres to the principles; students who have internalised the functionality may use them to explain their personal usage in their text.

This can also be used as guidelines by students who wish to edit their first draft. The lack of hard and self-critical editing has been identified as one of the main problems students face in advanced stages of academic writing. The following ten or twelve “golden rules” have been discussed with students from different countries extensively at various levels from BA to PhD. The simplistic wording of the rules below, each starting with a clear imperative *use* or *avoid*, may sound threatening, but they have been welcomed as a checklist in critical situations when final editing had to be done in

a structured and concentrated last-minute action. These rules complement the guidelines for writing a first draft in the previous section.

The most central golden rule that applies basically to all the following more specific rules is that “friendliness to the readers is rewarded” by the time and attention that the readers have to develop to appreciate the attempt of the writer to capture them.

#### *Use a clear hierarchical structure*

After the first, more intuitive approach to academic writing many students have to learn that “the powerful overflow of ideas“ is only a starting point and this bottom-up approach has to be “tamed” by a top-down approach to make the message even more accessible and clearer to the reader than the writer has ever assumed. Parallel constructions in headlines and sections are as important as on the lower levels of hierarchy (as sentence and vocabulary discussed below). Modern text processing style sheets can help writers to gain a feeling for hierarchical structures on these highest levels. This somewhat mechanical approach to writing patterns at all levels links very well with the efforts to train structured reading discussed above.

#### *Use clear metalanguage*

A major difference between general writing, for instance in traditional essays or modern blogs, is that students have to see and use the metalanguage that is central to all academic writing. In many cases the explicit use of conjuncts and adverbials to link sentences, paragraphs, and sections is the main topic in the first academic writing classes. This leads to a well-known overuse of cohesive devices in students’ first attempts at academic writing. Even more important is the decision that students must take in which sections of their critical approach to their own writings must be reflected in more or less tentative language. The variation of hedging depends, of course, very much on the results of the empirical analysis and the decision whether to stick their necks out or whether to be careful depends partly on personality but also on training. The advantage is that it can make students proud of their own work when they realise which parts of their results they can be convinced of and propagate more or less forcefully as their own achievement.

#### *Use clear paragraph structures*

Traditionally this is achieved by a uniform theme – rheme sequence, i.e. the new topic is introduced at the end of the first sentence of the paragraph and the following references are clearly oriented towards that noun phrase. This dichotomy from the Prague School refigures as topic – comment in modern functional linguistics. The topic is not always the grammatical subject, since it refers to the pragmatic structure of the sentence or the management of information.

*Avoid unnecessary complexity at all levels of language*

In noun phrases, complex nominalisation like compounds or nouns with heavy premodifications are typical of German (and German academic style, in contrast to English styles, cf. Siepmann et al. 2011), so that some language-specific considerations may have to supplement these general rules: at the sentence and paragraph levels, it may be advisable to use parallel constructions to make it easier for the reader to follow the overall structure of argumentation. The sections and chapters of an academic text have explicit and transparent titles that provide readers a first indication about the sequence of argumentation if they only look at the headlines, which is easily done in modern text processing systems. Here again, similar structural sequences make it easier for the reader. Whether an IMRAD-similar sequence of structuring should be adhered to in chapters or in early writings like BA theses is a matter of debate.

*Avoid passives*

Passives are a useful grammatical structure if it is not clear who the agent of an action is. They can, of course, also be used consciously if agents have to be “mystified” (when a small boy who is alone in the house says “The vase got broken” when his mother asks him who did it). Another related feature is that passivisation may also lead to dehumanisation, so that negative actions can be made more acceptable. Students should be particularly aware of such opportunities for reader management and even manipulation.

*Avoid synonyms*

Although students may have been taught to avoid repetition in order to make their texts more interesting and to show their vocabulary skills by using synonyms in their early writing classes, “variation for variety’s sake” is not a virtue in “real” academic writing, since the reader will not want to admire the lexical beauty of the text but digest the message as effectively as possible. Thus the choice of words and phrases with similar or identical meaning may distract readers unnecessarily, when they ask themselves whether semantic nuances are intentional or not.

*Avoid clichés*

Clear cases of the mystification and (meaningless) construction of academic language have been ridiculed in both the German and American press for a long time (e.g. in the famous Sokal affair). Apart from formal jargon (e.g. overuse of latinate expressions from *ab uovo* to *tempora mutantur*), the borderline of stale clichés (those often quoted “to avoid” are, for instance, *When all is said and done* or *at the end of the day*) and

creative clichés is always thin. So it is not easy to create and then go against the expectations to raise the attention of the reader. If reader expectations can be played with, this is always a good way to “deconstruct” and “raise awareness”. As in all such cases, extremely (stereo-)typical language usage may bore the reader, as long as it is not used consciously to make a specific point later by breaking the monotony of a text.

*Use the right word critically*

The choice of expressive words may differ in different types of writing: probably it is most important in creative writing, less important in journalistic writing and least important in academic writing. In academic writing, the choice of words is determined by the subject area where specialists have usually argued over terms and concepts, which does not leave the novice writer too much choice but to go with the authorities they wish to side with. Less subject-specific words can be taken from the academic wordlist (Coxhead 2000). Creative guidelines are appropriate in particular for popular academic writing, when specific technical concepts have to be “translated” for the general academic reader. Here academic jargon definitely has to be avoided in order not to alienate the reader. Metaphors may help to imagine theoretical concepts. Colourful explicit adjectives may help to distinguish between nouns, as long as they do not distract from the core message. Good writers are aware of all these pitfalls and are very critical about their own word choices.

*Use main clauses for main messages*

Subordinate clauses can be very appropriate in noun phrase position as the subject clause “What I wanted to say is:” and main clauses can be very appropriate for expressing the circumstances of a proposition in adverbial clauses. Subordinate clauses can be used to reduce noun phrase complexity and facilitate the reading of the text. The reading is not made easier, however, when the subordinate clauses are longer than the main clauses of a sentence. Even if the author is proud to be able to master such grammatical complexities, s/he may run the risk of losing their readers, who spend more time with parsing and processing than following the sense and argumentation.

*Use English punctuation options to the full*

Punctuation seems to be a necessary evil to students, particularly since English punctuation rules are very complex and do not have one function only. But they are very powerful tools in guiding the reader and their functional value is often underestimated:

This has been pointed out explicitly by Greenbaum (1996: 503):

- There are numerous graphic displays that are unique to human communication. The conventions of punctuation reflect only crudely — if at all — the pauses and intonational patterns that occur in speech.
- The present punctuation system for English was essentially in place during the second half of the seventeenth century. It is linked more to grammatical structure than to the rhythms of speech.
- Punctuation marks do not necessarily coincide with pauses in speech. They occasionally indicate intonational features.
- The two major functions of punctuation marks are to separate and to enclose.
- There is a hierarchy of separation marks and a hierarchy of enclosing marks.
- The most frequently used marks are the comma and the period.
- The separation marks are periods, question marks, exclamation marks, colons, semicolons, commas, and dashes.
- The enclosing marks come in pairs, though one of the pair may be absorbed by a more major mark. The enclosing marks are parentheses, dashes, commas, and quotation marks.
- Two punctuation marks apply to words. They are apostrophes and hyphens.

Finally, I would like to add two special imperatives that I call supra-rules, since they are on a higher level of abstraction:

#### *Break the rules*

It should be clear that all these rules are only tendencies that are based on certain functional criteria. Very few English grammar rules are genuine 100% rules that can never be broken and this again gives the writer a tool to attract attention: twisting or breaking the rules of grammar and idiomaticity forces the reader to stop and think about not only form, but also content. This is a very powerful device in writer-reader interaction – when we want the reader to stop and think ...

#### *Don't say too much*

In a few cases we may not say enough: sometimes it may be necessary to be more explicit for a certain readership, especially if the target group does not belong to the same academic discourse community. However, there may be more cases when we say too much on three levels: first, for the advanced reader, there may be too many hedges and too many (explicit) linkers (although this is commonly taught in academic writing classes at beginners levels); second, the forceful juxtaposed position of two contrastive lexemes may make the point of the writer much clearer; third, the most embarrassing feeling the writer may create in the reader is when s/he carries on speaking or writing without having anything new to say. The writer, therefore, has to decide very self-critically whether to include ideas that deviate slightly from the main cause of argumentation and even more, the author has to decide whether to put it in or out,

avoiding recipes which have served in the past too often as a device to show that the writer knows how to impress the reader. In the end, it is always good to stop when one has finished the main point. Two hundred years ago, the German writer Jean Paul wrote: “Sprachkürze bringt Denkweite” (“Concise language inspires breadth of thought”?): to this there is little to add.

Despite these ten or twelve “rules” so far, it should be clear that the functional perspective of individual texts and text producers must have priority over slavishly ticked off “recipes”. However, individual flexibility to express writer identity and text individuality must be based on an awareness of departmental conventions that form the backdrop of all markedness and foregrounding, which makes the work of experienced writers lively and interesting for their academic community. And all conventions can only maintain their validity if they are functional, i.e. based on psycholinguistically sound principles of the writing and reading processes that do not violate but instead support efficient communication.

#### A scaffolding approach to support independent learners

Of course, academic writing must be based on a certain proficiency of language. In a foreign language like English at university level, we can assume an intermediate level (equivalent to B2 in the Common European Framework of Reference) as a starting point for the next steps to writing and academic writing. From this level onward, it is possible to develop writing skills, for which numerous “recipes” are on the market: Basically the same “dos and don’ts” have been given for centuries in many languages. Bickham (1992 and many more editions), for instance, offers useful advice in “memorable” headings for crisp chapters like:

Don’t consider yourself too smart ... when you can bring your writing down to earth where your readers are. (4-5)

Don’t show off when you write ... when you can give your ideas power by putting complex ideas into simple language. (6-7)

Don’t expect miracles ... when you can achieve your writing goals through hard work, patience and perseverance. (8-9)

Although these “mistakes (and how to avoid them)” are intended for fiction writing, they also apply to academic writing. Generally the skills must become increasingly specialised: writing skills must be based on language skills and academic writing skills must be based on writing skills. Thus academic writing classes do usually not start in the first semester: they are preceded by general writing classes and start simultaneously with the first seminars, where writing a seminar paper is usually required for successful completion of the course. But even here it makes a big difference whether students are allowed to write “an essay” or “scholarly article”, since students are used to argumentative essays from school and find academic genres

much more difficult. When the creative flow of ideas has to be controlled much more critically, even good writers need help, especially at the beginning and at the end of their writing project. The project idea implies that a certain effort has to be made to achieve a defined goal at the end of a fixed period of time. To master this task successfully, instructional scaffolding seems appropriate. This approach is based on Vygotsky's 80 year old concept of an expert assisting a novice (cf. Vygotsky 1978 or Van der Veer/Valsiner Eds. 1994); in our case, students require assistance in order to achieve their learning goals. Today the approach is often combined with problem-based learning (PBL) or task-based learning (TBL). Whereas telling learners how to achieve a learning goal may help the learner immediately, they profit more in the long run if the instructor encourages them in their individual paths in constructing new knowledge. This applies to academic reading (see p.26 above) as well as to academic writing. For a novice writer in the field, writing a paper or thesis is a complex and time-consuming task; it is a special challenge to organize a number of unordered, overlapping ideas into a long (linear) text in a convincing way.

More specifically, such a top-down approach includes an understanding of a number of small logical steps towards successful academic text composition in English:

- jotting down words to sketch ideas in a brain-storming session,
- organizing the ideas or key words in a hierarchical multidimensional mind-map so as to provide a focus in the centre and overlapping concepts and related issues, around it (of course, this mapping can be done on paper as well as on computer using appropriate software);
- fitting the text into the structural genre conventions (like IMRAD for an empirical research paper);
- segmenting these sections further into paragraphs in a logical sequence (with the help of explicit cohesive devices in the students' repertoire);
- forming concrete sentences that fit the argumentation flow and highlight the important information (like theme-rheme sequences);
- choosing appropriate academic words (from Coxhead's academic word list) and lexico-grammatical combinations to ensure idiomatic phrasing;
- checking whether all formulations are in line with what is understood as academic style in the (sub-)discipline.

After the first or the second stage in this "road map", the student has to decide on a preliminary title and carry out a general feasibility test to ascertain whether (some of) these ideas can be put into empirical action.

A similar top-down approach may help at the end of the paper, especially when the students have internalised the major distinction between re-editing and proof-reading:

- reading through the complete text produced,
- scrutinizing it on three levels in this order:

- the macro-level (although it may be painful to throw away a section that may have been produced so laboriously),
  - the meso-level (also to make sure that there are enough examples to illustrate the phenomenon and enough tables and figures to support the argumentation) and
  - the micro-level (to make sure phrases and sentences are still idiomatic despite all the changes during the writing and rewriting process);
- checking word usages with the help of a monolingual dictionary, a collocations dictionary (including the Longman Language Activator in traditional book form or on DVD), a (machine-readable) text collection of similar style, discipline and genre, or Google in a web-as/like-corpus (advanced) search;
  - making sure that the metalanguage, especially hedging (whether to risk author commitment by using I am convinced or avoiding it by writing The data suggest) and cohesive devices appear appropriate for the readership;
  - scrutinizing the formal conventions of the (sub-)discipline from citations to references;
  - looking over the complete text to ensure that it appears tidy and attractive, without being too ornate, individual without being too different from the genre conventions to distract the reader (and examiner); and finally
  - inspecting the printed copy from title page to appendix (or accompanying DVD), just to make sure a last time whether the copy submitted is identical to the “masterpiece” in the mind.

Of course, this sequence of tasks is meant as a checklist, but serves as an illustration of the complexity of the writing project, indicating that every student has to master developing their own strategies.

#### Guided instruction from principles to concrete tasks

Our discussion of writing instruction has to focus on a modern “European” educational setting, i.e. “continental” in the British sense of excluding mother-tongue speakers on the British Isles and concentrating on lingua franca users of the highest levels, academic writers who work to develop their skills from the B range in the CEFR framework up to the C range, which encompasses the levels of proficiency and mastery. On this level, continental or even national traditions of academic writing have developed over centuries and even the general principles may be different - to say nothing of the concrete classroom instruction. Here, Rienecker/Jørgensen (2003: 111) suggest an interesting compromise:

Therefore, we find that writing in the continental tradition – if necessary or desirable at all – should not take place at least until the later stages of study, when some sort of apprenticeship relation between teacher and student is a realistic possibility.

Consequently we would propose to planners of education in continental surroundings a progression in the teaching of writing from the more manageable Anglo-American approaches, with emphasis on focused problem investigation towards a more

comprehensive, hermeneutical treatment of the subjects in their entirety – a continental approach.

A good example of the analytical approach that breaks down the writing project into small manageable tasks is the focus on sections of larger genres. In linguistic and all social science writing, a central section of a thesis is the research question, which is much more important today than only a few years ago. Rienecker (1999: 105) has illustrated features of a good research question in detail:

#### A Good Research Question

- is interesting to its writer
- and is relevant to the subject
- is based on:
  - »something not right«, »it is said . . . but in reality«
  - »the relation between X and Y«
  - »the observation that sticks out«
  - »a sense of wondering«
- makes it possible to debate and argue a point
- and makes it possible to conclude something
- is in question- or statement (claim)-form
- has one clear main question (+ subquestions)
- is posed in precise words
- is clearly marked in the introduction
- is wherever possible, short, preferably less than 10 lines long!

For some students this may be too explicit again, but for beginners it may be a useful checklist that indicates the great art and thinking that has to go into a key concept like “research question” today. Similar lists and exercises can concentrate on other key aspects such as what is accepted as “evidence” in different disciplines (cases, frequencies, correlations, significance, etc.). With the help of case studies or best-practice models students can work out themselves what the conventions in their departments are and what is expected of them to be considered successful writers in their community.

#### A portfolio approach to maintain progress in learning

One of the latest developments in academic writing at the European level is the focus on portfolios in pedagogy and assessment (Little 2013 and Orlova 2013). The digital European Language Portfolio (ELP) aims at a wide range of achievements. It can strengthen learner autonomy if learners become aware that it cannot only help them to measure their own writing progress but also to increase their employability afterwards.

The possible pros and cons of writing portfolios have been discussed extensively by Hyland (2002: 138-144): From a learner perspective, portfolios can be motivating, since learners take up the challenge to increase their skills in a wide range of genres; they can evaluate their own progress and portfolios can be a meaningful record of their work. From a teacher perspective, portfolios are useful, since teachers can adopt

flexible selection criteria and adapt them to their needs: they can make grading more rewarding if the focus is on the learners' progress towards the end of their studies; they also help to integrate curriculum requirements, developmental evaluation, and reflection on the writing progress over time, genres and contexts. These advantages are more important than the disadvantages especially for teachers, who have to rely on their students, their fairness in text production (despite the possibility of plagiarism) and compilation. In general, such a holistic approach to writing can be much more rewarding for the learning partners on a small scale in specific institutions and on a large scale on a (comparative) national level (almost like PISA).

## Conclusion

This contribution has attempted to show new perspectives of English for academic purposes, in particular for academic writing. The new paradigm sees writing as a craft that can be “constructed” through different modern approaches. The contribution has covered a wide area from principles to “rules”, from implicit to explicit teaching, from the native to the non-native, and from formal to functional perspectives. In this mosaic, the focus on the readers is central, for academic discourse develops in the academic community and every contributor has to make a choice between disciplinary conventions and individual creativity.

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