The Establishment of Writing Features in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Professional Purposes (EPP) and Its Relations to a Discourse Community

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Abstract

The debate about English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has been a primary concern of applied linguists in examining the use of English in a specific domain involving English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Professional Purposes (EPP). Not to mention that writing research has been the focus of attention when dealing with these two different settings. The writers of these two events seem to apply special features to perform an identity and their existence in their community. Therefore, it is worth noting that identifying the features of writing from a global perspective in the specification of EAP and EPP domains leads to a better understanding of their distinctive features. EAP and EPP are classified based on the discourse community theory in studying the distinctions. The data classifications analyzed in the present study were collected based on previous studies of Ruiz-Garrido et al.'s (2010) English Professional and Academic Purposes, and the writing features were classified into five categories in general, including genre, people, linguistic features/content, disciplines, accessibility, setting, convention/moves, and goals.

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INTRODUCTION

The paper provides an overview of two concepts - English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Professional Purposes (EPP), highlighting their differences as well as their relation to discourse communities. A detailed discussion of these issues is initiated by defining academic and professional writing purposes. It is followed by outlining discourse community and classifying academic and professional writing into differentiations. Altogether, the study applies data collected through the literature
review and synthesis, aiming to give an overview of EAP and EPP in the existing literature, characterize each of the selected notions and identify major distinctions between them. It also focuses on establishing the relation of the above-mentioned concepts to discourse communities.

**English for Academic Purposes (EAP)**

EAP refers to teaching English to assist learners’ study or research in that language, including all aspects of academic and communicative practices (Hyland, 2006, p. 1). He further defined the classification of the academic, communicative practice into five categories, which are:

1. Pre-tertiary, undergraduate and postgraduate teaching (from materials design to lectures and classroom tasks).
2. Classroom interactions (from teacher feedback to tutorial and seminar discussion).
3. Research genres (from journal articles to conference paper grant proposals).
4. Students writing (from essays to exam papers and graduate theses).
5. Administrative practice (from course documents to doctoral oral defense).

Ypsilandis and Kantaridou point out that EAP refers to the academic needs of students and future professionals who attempt to endeavor a career in the educational environment (2007, p. 69). In addition, Schmied (2011) noted that EAP closely adheres to academic writing in the field of research area focusing on text-oriented research (e.g., assessing syntactic complexity by the number of words or clauses), writer-oriented research (e.g., think-aloud protocols, or task observations), and reader-oriented research (e.g., mediation between writers, institutions, or cultures and conventions). In doing so, EAP appears to primarily cover various aspects relevant to teaching materials, student assignments, research areas, and academic careers, typically in higher education settings.

**Writing for academic purposes**

Many people write in English in many formats such as for business, school, website, diary, letter, or email. The words in the format contain slightly different styles of English. However, none of these examples are academic writing. As a general rule, academic writing applies special characters, including logical, comprehensible, coherent, structured, and backed up by evidence (Crossley, 2020; McNamara et al., 2010; M. K. Russell, 2014). Furthermore, Russell and Cortes (2012) opine that academic writing usually refers to university writing, college writing, thesis and dissertation writing, and scientific writing. It is an advanced writing style produced by students at the
university or college and academics involving Ph.D. students, lecturers, and researchers. Graduate students, for example, seem to face various writing tasks throughout their selected degree programs that become progressively more complex and need to be written academically (AlMarwani, 2020; Fernsten & Reda, 2011; Pineteh, 2013; Singh, 2015; Subandowo, 2020).

For the most part, writing for academic purposes deals with students’ essays, lab reports, academic papers, and theses written by MSc and Ph.D. students (Lax, 2002; Singh, 2015; J. M. Swales & Feak, 1996). Students from different subject disciplines tend to apply certain conventions and vocabulary, for example. Other general characteristics across all disciplines involve plan and focus, structure, evidence, and formality in tone and style (see Staples et al., 2016). Plan and focus links to answer the questions and demonstrate an understanding of the subject. The structure is relevant to the logical order of the paragraph in presenting related points and materials. Evidence is to support opinions and arguments and to exemplify the subject area. Formality in tone and style covers appropriateness, conciseness, and balance in language use and tenses.

It is worth noting that academic writing is a product of many considerations, including audience, purpose, organization, style, flow, and presentation (Swales & Feak, 1995). Audience refers to an instructor who is presumably quite knowledgeable about an assigned writing topic, advisors, thesis committees, and people who will review our research work before presenting at a conference or publishing in a paper journal. Purpose emphasizes understanding whether the audience knows less or more than the writer. The writer’s purpose is often instructional if the audience knows less than the writer (e.g., a textbook). On the other hand, the writer’s purpose is usually to display familiarity, expertise, and intelligence if the audience knows more than the writer. Organization accounts for a structured format of information appropriate for the particular type of text. In accordance with the general rules, the information is organized according to problem-solution structure, comparison and contrast, cause and effect, and classification (e.g., “two types of individual differences: (1) motivation and (2) aptitude”). Style ensures the communication is inappropriate, consistent, and suitable regarding the message and the audience. Another relevant factor for successful communication is flow. The flow means moving from one statement in a text to the next. This factor establishes a clear connection of ideas in the text and helps the readers follow the connection. The last important consideration in academic
writing is presentation. This aspect has to do with errors in language written by non-native speakers, such as mistakes in the article of preposition usage, basic grammar errors (subject-verb agreement), or misspelled words.

**Writing for scientific purposes**

Scientific writing is a technical form emphasizing scientific information and communication at either national or international levels. Writing a scientific paper is usually associated with publication in order to share all scientific work that has been completed and advanced career in a certain institution, such as promotion for a professor at the university (e.g., Azizah & Budiman, 2017a, 2017b; Ferris, 2019; Habibie & Hyland, 2019; Mur Dueñas, 2019). A published scientific paper in English requires good content and high-quality English. Some papers may receive rejection or acceptance with comments from the reviewers, including English improvement and proofreading. All scientific and academic journals would accept more papers than the available space. It means that this open space leads to very high competition among scientific writers.

Nearly all journals own their specific format for writing a scientific paper. Generally, a scientific paper applies IMRaD (Introduction, Method, Results, and Discussion) format (Glasman-Deal, 2020). To be more specific, the format contains the title, abstract, keywords, introduction, aims, materials and methods, results including any figures and tables, discussion, conclusion, acknowledgments, and references. For example, the format may change due to a specific scientific genre, a scientific poster, or a research proposal.

![Diagram of a scientific article structure](image)

**Figure 1.** The shape of a research article by Glasman-Deal (2020, p. 2)
The scientific publication, by and large, relates to the collaborative nature of STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine) (Reinhold et al., 2017). Scientific paper of this collaborative nature usually publishes in high-impact journals where non-native speakers of English frequently lead their fields. Accordingly, the language of science is international, meaning that English is not owned by English speakers but by many users worldwide. Scientific papers published in scientific and academic journals create a global science communication language that is accessible.

English for Professional Purposes (EPP)

The specialized language use of English in academic and professional settings has been the attention of many applied linguists. The focus of this area began to be recognized several decades ago, in the 1960s, and the discussion of this field has not ended since then.

There have been many debates concerning whether there is a clear distinction between EPP and EAP. On the one hand, EPP is a notion characterizing a “special discourse used in specific settings by people sharing common purposes” (Ruiz-Madrid & Fortanet-Gómez, 2015, p. 8). Another group of scholars, on the other hand, views every occasion of language use as specific, and so do EPP and EAP (Widdowson, 1998, p. 4). Following the view of Orr (2012), we rest our view on the opinion that EPP covers a specific domain, having been influenced by worldwide digitalization and globalization.

The significance of science and technology development across the universe, as well as the globalization and internationalization in the academic setting, such as world-class university competition, lead to the English language becoming the lingua franca of the international community. Subsequently, professional users of English seem to apply specialized language to communicate and share knowledge. Ypsilandis and Kantaridou (2007) propose the classification, defining English for Professional Purposes as dealing with the actual needs of (future) professional work, whereas English for Academic Purposes targeted the students building a professional path in an academic area.

Furthermore, the globalization process has a considerable impact on shaping future directions of the education process. More precisely, in the current context, it influences teaching of English language. Modifying and adapting education to new realities is changing language teaching and learning approaches. The major teaching
strategies are moved towards the needs of the learners, and thus, programs and syllabuses are adjusted to meet their professional demands.

Gavrilova and Trostina (2014) highlight the use of specialized language and professional jargon form a specific discourse, i.e., the ability to solve communicative tasks within professional activities of bachelor’ and master’ economics programs at Russian universities. They further highlighted that EPP is provided “to equip learners with specialized vocabulary and jargon within a professional framework and everyday professional communication patterns” (p. 10). This means that professional communication patterns relate to the appropriate language use in terms of grammar, lexis, register, study skills, discourse, and genre.

Discourse Community

Discourse community is a group of people who share certain language-using practices (Bizzell, 1992). Swales (2016) strongly emphasizes that discourse community refers to a group of people who shared a set of discourse and ways of communicating about their goals and purposes. Furthermore, Swales (1990) precisely identifies a discourse community based on six defining characteristics, which consist of:

1. A broadly agreed set of common public goals;
2. Mechanisms of intercommunication among its members;
3. Participatory mechanisms to provide information and feedback;
4. Community specific genres;
5. A highly specialized terminology;
6. A high general level of expertise;

The term discourse community has recently been extensively used and critically discussed by scholars in applied language studies. Discourse community seems to be a way of recognizing that communications largely operate within conventions employed by diverse types of communities. In academia, for example, Swales (2016) distinguished three types of discourse communities, (1) local discourse communities, (2) focal discourse communities, and (3) folocal discourse communities. Local discourse community refers to a group of people who work at the same place (as in a factory or a university department) or the same occupation in the same area (all the bakers in a town). This discourse community attains many abbreviations, acronyms, and some special words and phrases, including terminologies that the general public may not understand. There are three subfields of local discourse communities:
residential, vocational, and occupational, yet only the last of these categories seems to apply to the university context.

The focal discourse community is the second type of Swales’ (2016) discourse community. This community typically is relevant with associations that reach across a region, a nation, and internationally. The focal discourse communities may include informal grouping or more formal ones with rules, elections, and paid memberships. Group members can be of different nationalities, ages, and occupations and differ considerably in their economic circumstances and educational background. They come to pass this group due to a focus on their hobby or recreational preference. To date, focal community discourses have been much aided by modern conveniences such as email and the cell phone. Occasionally, the community produces a newsletter or has some other sort of publication distributed among the members.

The other major kind of focal discourse community is professional rather than recreational. In many professions, a national association is designed to bind the members and provide specialized expertise. TEFLIN (the association for Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Indonesia) would be, for instance. This association has a national and international conference, whereby individuals from distant places are unable to bind together to learn of the latest developments. If the members are academically inclined, this association also provides a journal for their papers as well as supports one or more journals for their preferences.

The third type of Swales’ (2016) discourse community is the folocal discourse community. This discourse community category has characteristics of both local and focal groups. The categorization of folocal discourse communities is based on hybrid communities whose members have a double allegiance as internal and external challenges, and pressures confront them. For instance, a university department in a research-active university can be both a local and a focal discourse community. Members of the university department belong to a local discourse community, as they understand how things operate in their institution, including teaching and administrative activities. On the other hand, they are also specialized scholars whose closest colleagues are likely to be elsewhere, perhaps across the countries, and whose actions include giving a talk at the conference in other places and publishing articles in reputational journals.
The distinction between EAP and EPP writing features in the discourse community

The following table represents the characteristics of academic writing and professional writing in practices based on Ruiz-Garrido et al. (2010).

Table 1. The distinction between EAP and EPP writing features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Academic writing</th>
<th>Professional writing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genre</td>
<td>Writing assignments, research articles, acknowledgment, essays, thesis and dissertation (Hyland, 2006; Mendis, 2010; Ruiz-Garrido et al., 2010; J. M. Swales &amp; Feak, 2018)</td>
<td>Advertisement, news reports, daily/monthly company internal project report, social construction, corporate value statement (CVS) genre, identity construction (e.g., professional and institutional identity) (Askehave &amp; Zethsen, 2010; Blitvich, 2010; Connor et al., 2009; Shaw, 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>Scholars, lecturers, students (undergraduate/postgraduate), university professors, researchers, international audience (Mendis, 2010; Swales &amp; Feak, 2018)</td>
<td>Industrial developers, researchers, expertise (e.g. doctor), Adherent and non-adherent subgroups, employees (Connor et al., 2009; Shaw, 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic features/content</td>
<td>English, rigorous selection of materials, detailed description and justification of methods, claim and hedges, high lexical density, high nominal style, impersonal construction, specialized vocabularies and terminologies, latinate verb, speculative epistemic lexical (e.g. consider, know, predict, propose), deductive epistemic lexical (e.g. calculate, conclude, demonstrate), evidential epistemic lexical (e.g. note, quote, report, appear) (Hyland, 2006; Shaw, 2010)</td>
<td>Native language, L1/L2 empowering language use, abstract nouns, narrative or bullet points (Askehave &amp; Zethsen, 2010; Blitvich, 2010; Connor et al., 2009; Shaw, 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>Biology, the language sciences, medicines, computer science, chemistry, artificial intelligence, anthropology, linguistics, medical fields, economics (Swales &amp; Feak, 2018)</td>
<td>Business field: business, health science, or science and engineering (Connor et al., 2009; Ruiz-Garrido et al., 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>Public (Shaw, 2010)</td>
<td>Private (Shaw, 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settings</td>
<td>Academic institution/academic knowledge, university, conference (Mendis, 2010; Ruiz-Garrido et al., 2010; Shaw, 2010)</td>
<td>Professional domains, company, conference (Shaw, 2010)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Table 1 above represents the major distinctions between professional and academic English writing. This data shows several categories depending on which the former or the latter type of writing can be characterized. What stands out in the table is that both kinds of writing encompass a variety of genres, including, for instance, articles, assignments, theses for academic writing, and various reports and letters for a professional one. Thus, the classification is based on genre, disciplines, grammatical features, authors, settings, goals, and accessibility to the texts.

Overall, the data from the table indicates that EAP and EPP can be distinguished as specific kinds with distinct qualities and attributes. Moreover, specialized terms of use and aims also affect the syntactic structure of the text and linguistic complexity based on which distinction between the types can be established. Another interesting aspect is related to the framework of the text. Particularly, the structure of academic writing mostly corresponds to the scheme containing the introduction, methods, results, and discussion parts (i.e., IMRAD, Swales, and Feak, 2010). On the other hand, the professional text is not composed in a particular frame; less extensive and transparent. However, it has a specific format, requiring a heading including the information about the address or addressee, closing, and signature in addition to the body, which contains the entire text.

Conclusion
This topic is pertinent to the status of English as a second language (ESL) or a foreign language (EFL). This paper addressed the issue of ESP writing by focusing on the emergence of two distinct communities involving EAP and EPP. When producing
texts, these two specific groups evidenced their particular features. The use of the theoretical-based discourse community aids in the development of a better understanding of EAP and EPP by categorizing genre, people, linguistic features/content, disciplines, accessibility, settings, convention/moves, and goals. The current study is expected to provide a pedagogical alternative by incorporating the aforementioned writing features into the EAP and EPP writing fields, specifically for EFL/ESL writers.

References


