

# *Part I English for Academic Purposes and study skills*

## **1 EAP and study skills: definitions and scope**

### **1.1 What is English for Academic Purposes (EAP)?**

A provisional, rather general, working definition of EAP, which we shall enlarge upon shortly, is that 'EAP is concerned with those communication skills in English which are required for study purposes in formal education systems' (ETIC 1975).

#### *1.1.1 Background*

The first recorded use of the term 'English for Academic Purposes' appears to be in 1974 (Johns, T. F. 1981); by 1975 it was in more general use. The published proceedings of the joint SELMOUS-BAAL Seminar at Birmingham University in 1975 on 'The English Language Problems of Overseas Students in Higher Education in the UK' were entitled '*English for Academic Purposes*' (Cowie and Heaton 1977). '*English for Academic Study*' was used by the British Council (ETIC 1975) as the title of its collection of papers, mostly on English for Science and Technology. One of the papers was 'Developing Study Skills in English' (Candlin *et al.* 1975).

Study skills were coming increasingly to the fore in the 1970s in practice material for students of English. An early book in the USA was *Study Skills for Students of English* by R. C. Yorkey (1970). In the UK, J. B. Heaton wrote *Studying in English: A practical approach to study skills in English as a second language* (1975). In 1979, the first title in the Collins Study Skills in English series appeared (James *et al.* 1979).

In Britain, increased professionalism in the teaching of EAP at university level was indicated by the re-naming in 1989 of an older-established group to the British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes (BALEAP). (See Appendix 3.)

### *1.1.2 Range of settings*

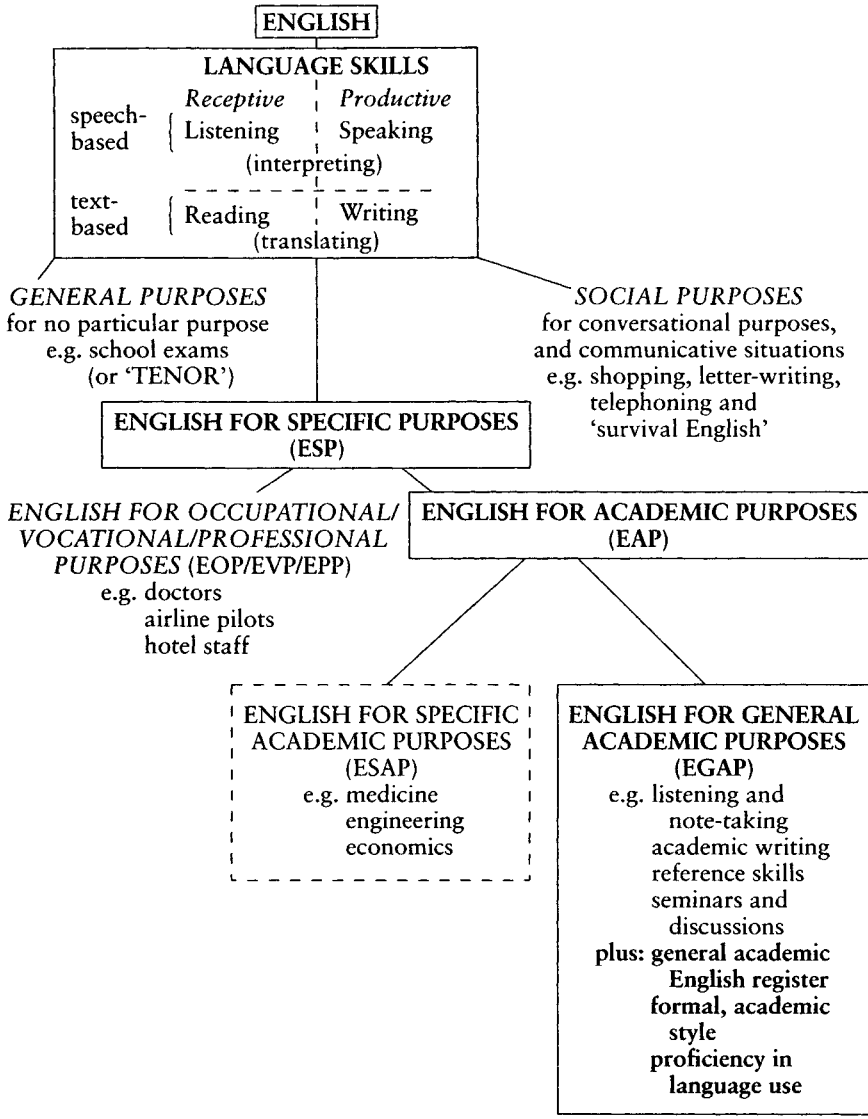
EAP takes place in a variety of settings and circumstances. These range from an entirely English-speaking context (e.g. UK, Ireland, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, etc.) to the students' own countries. These countries may have English as a Foreign Language (EFL), e.g. Germany, Finland; or as an official/second language (ESL) or medium of instruction in schools and/or colleges, e.g. anglophone African countries, India. The students may need EAP for higher education studies in their own country, e.g. for reading academic texts; or for higher education in L1 countries, e.g. all skills may be needed. They may also use EAP on pre-departure courses in their own countries before studying abroad. See Chapter 4, the section on 'International EAP courses' for examples of the variety of settings.

The teachers may be native speakers of English (NS) or non-native speakers (NNS). The courses may be pre-sessional, i.e. held before an academic course begins, and usually full-time, or in-sessional, i.e. held during an academic term or semester, and usually part-time. These latter courses are usually attended by students at the same time as they are studying their mainstream subjects. In addition, the courses may be 'short', e.g. 4–12 weeks, or 'long', e.g. 6–12 months, or longer. Courses may include formal teaching programmes, self-access situations, distance-learning materials or CALL (computer-assisted language learning).

EAP courses in UK universities are normally run by Language Centres, English Language (Teaching) Centres or Units, or departments with various other broadly similar names. If they are not free-standing, the majority are located in Departments of English, Linguistics, (Modern) Languages or Education. The pattern in other countries will vary but tends to be rather similar.

The settings and situations, like other aspects of education, are subject to change. To take an example in the UK, in 1992, 36 new universities were created from the previously-named polytechnics. In common with the older-established universities, they actively sought to increase their intake of overseas students in order to improve their financial position. Together with the expansion of the European student-exchange programmes, ERASMUS and TEMPUS, the increased numbers of non-native speakers of English entailed a growing need for EAP at tertiary level in the UK.

In different sections of this book, reference will be made to the various settings referred to above. The international nature of EAP and ESP (English for Specific Purposes) is emphasised in a wide-ranging survey article by Johns and Dudley-Evans (1991).



Note: In the USA a more usual model for the categories of ESP is as follows (Johns 1991). (This is similar to ETIC 1975.)

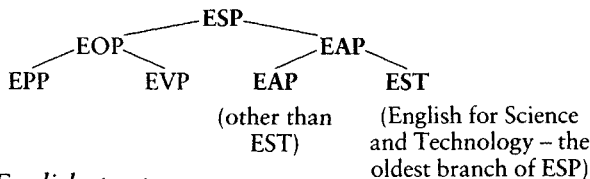


Figure 1 English: purposes

### 1.1.3 Coverage

The relationship between EAP, study skills and ESP needs to be examined. Figure 1 shows the generally accepted purposes for which English is needed. The route that we are mainly interested in, through the diagram, is boxed. The global language skills are central to all the language purposes. Our path takes us to *ESP*, bypassing English for General and Social Purposes.

In some situations, English for General Purposes has been named 'TENOR' – 'the Teaching of English for No Obvious Reason', no reason obvious to the learner, that is. Abbott (1981), who devised this acronym, explained it thus:

Most of the world's learners of English are schoolchildren . . .  
[who] are too young or too distant from any real communication  
in English to have any identifiable 'needs'.

Components of English for Social Purposes are often added to EAP courses, especially when they take place in English-speaking countries. For example, aspects of letter-writing may be included, and 'survival English', i.e. practice in listening and speaking to ensure an ability to operate functionally in a local English-speaking environment (see Chapter 4).

*ESP* has two main strands: English for Occupational/Vocational/Professional Purposes (EOP/EVP/EPP), which we shall only touch on, and *English for Academic Purposes (EAP)*, which we shall consider in depth. The term English for Educational Purposes (EEP) had earlier been used by Strevens (1977), but this is seldom used now.

You will notice in the diagram that *doctors* appears under EOP/EVP/EPP, and *medicine* is listed under *English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP)*. This is to highlight the essential difference between the two strands of *ESP*. For example, under EVP/EPP, material has been devised for trainee doctors to give them practice in doctor–patient interaction in casualty consultations (a very restricted situation): the material is based on 23 speech functions (Candlin *et al.* 1977). For students studying to be doctors, a book and cassettes have been prepared, under *ESAP*, to give practice in reading textbooks, listening to lectures and so on (e.g. James 1989).

### 1.1.4 EAP

We can now look at EAP in a little more detail. It has two divisions: it 'may be either *common core* or *subject-specific*' (Coffey 1984). These two divisions have been described by Blue (1988a) as *English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP)* and *English for Specific*

*Academic Purposes* (ESAP). A large proportion of the common core element is more usually known as 'study skills', and that is the label that will be used for those elements in this book. Some examples of study skills are given in the diagram, e.g. listening and note-taking. Study skills will be looked at in detail in this chapter as well as in Part II.

Subject-specific English is the language needed for a particular academic subject, e.g. economics, together with its disciplinary culture. It includes the language structure, vocabulary, the particular skills needed for the subject, and the appropriate academic conventions. This will also be examined in detail later.

In the past, some authors regarded EAP and study skills as being synonymous (Robinson 1980, 1991). However, the majority view, more recently, is that study skills is the key component in EAP – 'it is difficult ... to conceive of an EAP course which is not centred on study skills in English' (Phillips and Shettlesworth 1978) – but that EAP includes something in addition to this (see Jordan 1989 for a full discussion; this also includes an extensive bibliography on all aspects of EAP). These additional features can be summarised as *a general academic English register*, incorporating *a formal, academic style*, with *proficiency in the language use*. These features will also be looked at later.

### *1.1.5 Students and study skills*

Many students, whose mother tongue is not English, already possess study skills to an advanced level in their own language. They may simply need help to transfer their skills into English and, possibly, to adjust them to a different academic environment. However, they may need help with the other elements of EAP, e.g. style. Equally, there will be many students who do *not* already practise study skills efficiently in their own language or in their own country, or who do not possess all the study skills needed for effective study through the medium of English.

The students' needs may differ according to the learning environment. For example, students from educational systems very different from those in the UK, Australia or North America may need considerable help with various study skills and the academic conventions attached to them if they go to study in those countries. There may be substantial differences, for instance, between the structure and conventions attached to an academic discussion in Indonesia, Nepal or China, and a seminar for postgraduates in a British university. An added complexity is the different cultural conventions involved in academic argument. It is clear that an assessment of students' needs is crucial. These aspects will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

The first requirement of students will be the development of study

skills to an appropriate level for the subject(s) to be studied, in conjunction with the development of language proficiency. Once students are over the basic hurdle of study skills and language adequacy, they then have to 'learn the academic code'. This will involve a number of elements, depending on the level of education being pursued, i.e. undergraduate, post-graduate, research and so on. It may include adapting to a new academic system, within a different cultural environment, which has its own conventions. It may also involve observing the nature of the relationships between academic staff and students, and among students themselves. In turn, these relationships involve attitudes and expectations, some of which are expressed through language.

These, then, are the settings for EAP. In what follows, the various components and aspects of EAP will be considered in some detail: we shall look at examples of published material, data from surveys and research findings. Many of the issues raised above will be looked at in the light of evidence and experience.

## **1.2 What are study skills?**

A dictionary explanation of study skills encapsulates the essence:

abilities, techniques, and strategies which are used when reading, writing or listening for study purposes. For example, study skills needed by university students studying from English-language textbooks include: adjusting reading speeds according to the type of material being read, using the dictionary, guessing word meanings from context, interpreting graphs, diagrams and symbols, note-taking and summarizing.

(Richards, Platt and Platt 1992)

A reasonably comprehensive list of study skills in the study situations in which they are likely to be needed is set out in Figure 2. Some authors regard such an all-inclusive list as the 'broad' interpretation of study skills. A 'narrow' view is that the term 'study skills' is reserved for the more mechanical aspects of study, e.g. reference skills, the use of the library, the layout of dissertations and theses, the use of footnotes, bibliography, etc. (Robinson 1991). As Robinson (1991) says, 'all these skills need to be taught to the native speaker of English as well as the non-native'. This aspect will be considered shortly.

Earlier in this chapter, Figure 1 showed language skills separate from, but basic to, study skills. Figure 3 (adapted from Jordan 1977a) shows the integrated relationship of the skills. The receptive skills are seen as necessary inputs to the productive skills, with each receptive skill having