

Review article

A Typology of Research Trends and Themes in English for Academic Purposes: From 1986 to 2015

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ABSTRACT

This study reviews the current trends of research in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) as a subfield of Applied Linguistics. Through an extensive review of literature and an undertaking process of data collection, 15 books, 6 book chapters, and 347 research articles (RAs) were analyzed for identifying the major issues in EAP. Drawing upon the grounded approach, it was found that Academic Writing, Curriculum Development, and Critical EAP were the most challenging issues in EAP studies. Each of the research themes subsumed important issues such as genre analysis and approaches to teaching academic writing for Academic Writing; discussions on standard variety of English in academic contexts and practice of EAP among local students and teachers for Curriculum Development; and, critical thinking and pragmatism for Critical EAP. These issues and challenges explained in this paper hoped to be helpful for EAP to be matured as a field, and see itself in charge of preparing students to hold new roles both in academic and cultural contexts. However, it is acknowledged that, the concerns and issues are still unresolved and further research is needed for responding to them.

Keywords: Academic writing, critical EAP, EAP, EAP curriculum development, EAP trends

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INTRODUCTION

Since the inception of EAP in 1980s, the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) has witnessed the establishment of EAP as its central branch. It was originally considered as a part of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to deal with the commands of internationalization of education (Hyland, 2006). However, EAP currently is a

major force in ELT research and aimed at concentrating on the communicative skills required for academic purposes in formal educational settings (Jordan, 1997). The commitment to research-oriented language education and the compilation of different theories have placed EAP “at the front line of both theory development and innovative practice in teaching English a second/other language” (Hyland, 2006). For Hyland and Hamp-Lyons (2002), EAP creates grounding instruction for understanding the “cognitive, social and linguistic demands of specific academic disciplines”. This means that EAP has two-fold goals: improving proficiency in English, and equipping students with appropriate communicative skills required for doing academic tasks like presenting in conferences, writing research essays, and active participation in academic discussions and seminars (Gao & Bartlett, 2014). Because of such high aims, EAP becomes important in educational systems of those countries which have English as a medium of instruction (MOI) (Ashraf et al., 2014; Gao & Bartlett, 2014). One of the consequences of this interest is the increase number of courses taught in English. Moreover, the rapid rate of movements to western and international universities has sparked on the increasing demand for EAP courses in order to prepare students for reaching their academic goals (Liyanage & Walker, 2014). This demanding orientation has made EAP a potential area for investigating abundance of effective variables that students and instructors confront in their educational career. The introduction of new EAP courses

and the distinction of EAP courses from the courses of English for General Purposes are important for the researchers in EAP (Gao & Bartlett, 2014). However, it may be said that the essential need for investigating EAP is comprehensively explained by Swales and Feak (2012). They stated that the ever-increasing use of technology in educational settings, the abundance of research papers published by the co-authorship of graduate and post-graduate students, the presence of students at more conferences comparing to the past, the erosion of the traditional borders between native and nonnative, the emergence of world Englishes, and importantly, the collaborative works of graduate and post-graduate students as networked groups of researchers evidence the importance of EAP.

Based on what Jordan (1997), Flowerdew and Peacock (2001) noted, EAP was associated with teaching English for assisting and supporting those who tended to do research and study in English. Hence, Hyland (2006) asserted that the area could include teaching English to the graduates and postgraduates, research on classroom interactions and discussions, research genres, students writing, and administrative practice. However, he discussed that the communicative demands of current populations and modern universities involved EAP in more critical understanding of the contexts beyond immediate academic communication. In short, it is “specialized English-language teaching grounded in the social, cognitive and linguistic demands of academic target

situations, providing focused instruction informed by an understanding of texts and the constraints of academic contexts” (Hyland, 2006). The changing trends of EAP have been associated with some factors explained by Hyland (2006):

- The explosive growth of English as dominant language for the dissemination of academic knowledge and research findings
- Rapid rise of internationalization and globalization of higher education
- Diversity of learning needs over different communicative contexts
- Teaching English-language skills to the non-native English-speaking academics, especially in the contexts with English as medium of instruction (MOI), and the last not the least
- The concerns about the socio-political implications of EAP practices in local contexts related to what Benesch (1993) called hegemony of English

These are some of the challenges that EAP scholars recognize and highlight in order to find ways for dealing with them. Hyland (2006) asserted that the field was responsive to all the challenges because “EAP is a field open to self-scrutiny and change, and for these reasons it offers language teachers an ethical, reflective and fruitful field of research and professional practice and offers students a way of understanding their chosen courses and disciplines”. The published research

articles (hereafter RAs) associated with these challenges and responses reflect the assertions made by Hyland (2006) and other EAP scholars. However, the main practices reflected in the published papers by different researchers over different contexts have not received due attention, or to some extent, overlooked. RAs are the most updated sources of research findings reflecting the current developments across different fields of study. They mirror a wide variety of investigations published periodically and conducted by well-known, experienced, or rather novice researchers. Moreover, as Huang (2016) noted, the area of research like EAP has found its way and developed steadily over the years. This development cannot be acknowledged without attending both to the local practices and global perspectives for their invaluable contributions to the field. RAs are the showcases of these studies, which are very influential in establishing trends of research in the field. For this reason, in addition to the review of published books on EAP, the current study aimed at exploring the research trends of EAP reflected in the RAs published in the popular journals of Applied Linguistics.

METHOD

Corpus

Since the study aimed at evaluating research themes being practiced in the area of EAP, the corpus consisted of a huge collection of RAs (including conference papers), books, and book chapters investigating EAP issues between 1986 and 2015. The extensive

review of literature located 15 books relevant to this study, all of which are well-known and highly referred among EAP researchers and Applied Linguists (e.g., Benesch, 2001; Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001; Hyland, 2006; Jordan, 1997), 6 book chapters specifically written for EAP teachers and students (e.g., Harwood & Petric', 2011), 347 RAs picked up from 12 Applied Linguistics journals introduced as the top-most journals by the researchers such as Jung (2004), Egbert (2007), and Plonsky (2011): *English for Academic Purposes*, *English for Specific Purposes*, *Modern Language Journal*, *Language Learning*, *System*, *Foreign Language Annals*, *Applied Linguistics*, *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, *TESOL Quarterly*, *Language Testing*, *Language Teaching*, and *Language Teaching Research*. The journals were mainly edited by well-known scholars and verified by leading figures in the field; therefore, the research methods used to present EAP issues in the papers were supposed to be sound and acceptable. The process of collecting the corpus and the procedure for analyzing the data are given in the following section.

Procedure for Data Collection and Analysis

This study is a meta-analysis of the research issues in EAP area of study. In this section, the selection of studies, coding process, and analysis procedure are discussed. To start with, a comprehensive literature review was conducted to find the studies exploring the issues, challenges, and research themes of EAP. First, a computer search was conducted

over different electronic databases such as Science Direct, Sage Publication, ERIC and Oxford Journals. Second, more than 40 journals in Applied Linguistics which might have relevant papers were reviewed for issues published since 1980s. Third, the references cited in the articles found as relevant were reviewed for locating other publications containing data for EAP themes of research. Fourth, the titles of relevant papers were copied in Google Scholar search engine to find link for these publications via "cited in" applicability. Finally, we emailed those researchers who have studied EAP and published articles in this theme to send their papers and relevant articles. More than 2500 papers were collected for analysis. However, thorough review of the papers revealed that many of the studies had not included any implications for EAP practices. Moreover, there have been some studies which overlapped each other. Therefore, more than 700 articles were excluded from the list. In cases of doubt, group discussion was always conducted to reach consensus. Next, the papers were grouped into three categories: RAs (including conference papers), books, and book chapters. Through meticulous evaluation of each category, group discussion, and consultation with colleagues, PhD students and some accessible experts, we decided to exclude most of the conference papers and some of the RAs because of their lack of research qualities. The final papers qualified to be included in this study were 1436 RAs, 15 books, and 6 book chapters mainly explored different research issues in

EAP through sound research methodology. In cases where sufficient data on a particular issue were available, the research theme was considered as important and included in the major issues of EAP. If the insufficient number of studies provided evidence on a particular issue, the data were kept to see how they can be fit into the final report. As a matter of fact, we attempted to be as conservative as possible to minimize the possible inconsistencies in decisions.

The starting point for identifying research themes of EAP was coding the reported and examined variables in each article. The primary analysis of research variables included a dozen issues (e.g., perceptions of EAP teachers and students, problems of EAP practices, standard English vs. world Englishes, cultural and social issues in EAP practices, EAP curriculum, ESL contexts and EAP practices, many of them were convergent around a similar theme and some others were divergent from the main trends. To make this up, Glaser and Strauss' (1967) grounded theory was adopted to synthesize the themes, continually analyze them, and select the headings and sub-headings. Likewise, the constant comparative method by Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that the reviewed articles and obtained themes should be constantly compared to reach the final major theme. For example, the researchers read an article, extracted its main theme, and wrote out the theme to form a tentative research theme category. The next articles were read and their main themes were written and compared the previous ones.

If the themes were similar, the category did not change and the review proceeded to the next papers. If the themes were different, a new category was created. Through this grounded approach, all the selected papers, books, and book chapters were reviewed and compared to each other. After conducting this undertaking process, the explicit coding procedure explained by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and the constant comparative method given by Lincoln and Guba (1985) produced core codes such as EAP curriculum development, academic writing skill in EAP research, and critical EAP.

RESULTS

After an extensive review of selected corpora for this study, various trends of research as a response to the challenges and issues of EAP have been found. However, because of space limitation, and to make the results manageable, the major trends were noted in advance, and those which received less attention or underrepresented were just explained briefly. At the end, future directions and concerns of EAP are added. Trends of research in EAP are presented in Table 1.

According to Table 1, orientation towards writing RAs (n= 130, 35.32%) was the most researched trend in EAP studies. Analyzing discourse features of RAs (n= 34, 9.24%), discussing approaches to teaching academic writing (n= 22, 5.98%), lexical analysis and its contribution to writing acceptable academic texts (n= 22, 5.98%), and examining the English for general/

specific purposes (n= 21, 5.70) were the other frequent researched themes in EAP RAs. Writing competence in local practices (n= 16, 4.35%), needs/right analysis (n= 16, 4.35%), sociocultural issues in EAP curriculum (n= 16, 4.35%), and standard variety of English in academic contexts (n= 16, 4.35%) were also found to be important among researchers. Results also indicate that, in addition to writing academic texts and RAs, critical views toward academic teaching, sociocultural perspectives, and movement toward delineating various variables involved in EAP teaching and learning enhanced in recent years. For instance, critical thinking and pragmatism were flourished during

1996-2015, approving the importance of critical approaches in EAP.

Drawing upon the data, it was found that Academic Writing, Curriculum Development, and Critical EAP were the most challenging issues in EAP studies. Each of these research themes subsumed important issues such as genre analysis and approaches to teaching academic writing; discussions on standard variety of English in academic contexts and practice of EAP among local students and teachers; and, critical thinking and pragmatism. Academic writing is the most-researched topic in EAP articles. These major trends are discussed below.

Table 1
Frequency of trends of research in EAP

Trends of Research	Years of Publication			
	1986-1995	1996-2005	2006-2015	Total
Writing Skill in Academic Contexts				
Writing skill and authoring RAs	18	44	58	130(35.32)
Discourse features	5	11	18	34(9.24)
Approaches to teaching writing	4	7	11	22(5.98)
Lexical analysis	4	7	11	22(5.98)
Writing competence in local practices	2	6	8	16(4.35)
Writing assessment	2	5	6	13(3.53)
Transfer	1	5	6	12(3.26)
Corpus approach contribution	1	4	5	10(2.72)
EAP Curriculum Development				
English for General/Specific Academic Purposes	4	6	11	21(5.70)
Needs analysis/Right Analysis	1	6	9	16(4.35)
Sociocultural issues	1	7	8	16(4.35)
Standard Variety of English in Academic Contexts	4	5	7	16(4.35)
Preparing English Resources	2	6	7	15(4.08)
Evaluation in EAP programs	2	3	4	9 (2.44)
Critical EAP				
Critical Thinking	-	6	8	14(3.80)
Pragmatism	-	5	7	12(3.26)

DISCUSSION

Academic Writing

Academic writing is the most-researched topic in EAP articles. The changes of teaching academic writing have been observed over the years (De Silva, 2014; Reichelt et al., 2012). Swales and Feak (2012) noted that for many scholars “academic writing today is much more of a collaborative activity than it used to be”. The importance of academic writing stems from the notion of English for specific academic purposes emphasizing the disciplinary-based literacies, encouraging practitioners to think of different discourse and practices distinguished by specialized content areas (Hyland, 2006). Researchers have attempted to demonstrate these differences of discourses and disciplinary variations in the produced written texts. They did this, following the study skills, disciplinary socialization, and academic literacy approaches (see the discussion below).

Approaches to Teaching Writing. Writing as an academic skill in and across the disciplines for which students are trained in university curricula perceived to be an important skill for university students. Shih (1986) suggested a content-based approach for teaching academic writing skills. Leki and Carson (1994) surveyed those university students who passed ESL curricula in their tertiary levels to see how the writing skills they learned had been generalizable to the disciplinary practices in their university courses. Results indicated that some of the skills and strategies that students learned

were useful for their content courses, though they demanded new writing skills for their ongoing courses. Another suggested dominant perspective regarding teaching academic writing has been ‘deficit approach’ (Altbach, 2004) which tends to diminish the diversities and mismatches between the local performances and normalized expectations, and “advocates remediation, adjustment, and adaptation on the part of students” (Liyanage & Walker, 2014). The studies done in this regard (e.g., Carr, 2003; Cruickshank et al., 2003; Liyanage & Birch, 2001) found out that the potential of this approach for the remediation procedures and the production of discipline-specific teaching skill practices has not responded adequately. The failure of this approach in supporting instructors in teaching academic skills was attributed to the cultural issues (Hudson & Morris, 2003). Hence, the researchers suggested that cultural studies should focus on the value differences and the instructors should teach to difference and to advocate learners (Liyanage & Walker, 2014).

To move beyond the immediate contexts and practice academic writing across the contexts and disciplines has been another interesting area of inquiry for researchers. This tendency associated with the disciplinary socialization approach in which students are required to be involved in different academic content fields and make space for their voices over different contexts. Spack (1988), through the analysis of L1 writing programs, reported that to develop students’ academic writing and to help the students promote in this skill,

the experts in every discipline should be the writing teacher of that discipline and, in this case, the focus should be on the general principles of inquiry and rhetoric, emphasizing writing from sources.

Writing Competence in Local Practices.

Canagarajah (2014) asserted that local scholars tended to spend less time in writing. That is why the genres of their writing are different from those published in the West. Local writers tend to be more involved in the local epistemologies and express their local voices even in the papers submitted to the international journals (Canagarajah, 1996). Therefore, writing practices as well as communicative conventions in the area of academic literacies are found to be productive and important for novice/local scholars. The evaluative language of local writers was also noted to be important (Geng & Wharton, 2016; Loi et al., 2016). This linguistic knowledge besides textual interactions (Green, 2013) are notable writing competencies for local writers. Canagarajah (2014) stated that different competencies such as language awareness, discourse practices, negotiation strategies, awareness of language norms and genre conventions, are important for local practitioners. He pointed out that students should learn how to transfer their academic competencies to different contexts with variant traditions and audience expectations. The learners should learn how to adapt their writing approaches to different communities, how to cross some local norms and values, and how to make space for their voices in global academic communication.

Canagarajah (2014) proposed that EAP instructors followed genre-based teaching of oral/aural tasks and course in order to prepare their students for participating in discussions and lectures with different formats.

Genre Analysis. One of the research strands aimed at improving academic writing and helping non-native and novice writers was genre analysis, originally used in literary texts in Aristotle's Rhetoric (Motta-Roth & Heberle, 2015). This notion was considered as an effective procedure for teaching academic writing (Bailey, 2004; Nassaji, 2009; Samraj, 2006; Swales, 1990, 2004). The generic structure, organizing patterns, formats of academic papers, and lexicogrammatical features of the texts were the most research targets in genre studies (Flowerdew, 2015). The studies of these areas were mostly built on according to the three well-known genre schools of thought:

- The British ESP School (Swales, 1990) aimed at describing the linguistic features and discourse analysis of research papers for teaching academic writing to ESL graduate students (Jordan, 1997; Swales & Feak, 2004). The school tends to use social construct genre to provide devices for putting different texts under the same goals in certain academic fields. The priority of communicative purpose rather than the similarities of forms in classifying texts is the most notable feature of this school of genre.

- The North-American New Rhetoric (Bazerman, 1988) emerged to focus on academic texts as an indication of connections between form regularities and discourse content with social and cultural spheres of language in use (Freedman & Medway, 1994). This view of genre emphasizes that rhetorical practices rather than forms and content are the distinguishing features of genres.
- The Sydney Systemic Functional School (Hasan, 1989) in genre analysis concerned with the inter-relationship between language and its functions in social setting (Hyon, 1996). Accordingly, the texts are shaped by field, tenor, and mode as the semiotic variables surrounding social contexts. These variables are related to the systems of lexico-grammatical features of the texts such as cohesion, coherence, syntax, types of reference, and lexis (Bruce, 2008).

Following these theories, abundance of studies has been conducted on different academic texts within or across disciplines (e.g., Bazerman, 1988; Guinda, 2015; Hyland, 2002b; Ozturk, 2007; Samraj, 2002). The studies moved from providing generic-structure frameworks for academic texts to the recent ones which have attempted to make a social orientation towards genre pedagogies, credit the meaning production of academic texts, and pass the traditional rote memorization of linguistic features (Motta-Roth & Heberle, 2015). The attraction of

genre studies in recent years in different Applied Linguistics journals reveals that its functions and aims are helpful for teaching academic writing (Johns, 2015; Nwogu, 1997). Contrastive rhetoric studies have also appeared to be important in this regard. There have been comparative rhetorical studies demonstrating similarities and differences of similar genres across native and non-native English speakers or English and non-English texts (Mauranene, 1993; Petric', 2007). The major objective of these studies was to show that writing cultures might be different over different context even though the same language was used for presenting common genres (Connor, 2002; Paltridge, 2002).

Additional Related Issues. The view of transfer in reshaping previous knowledge in new writing contexts (De Larios et al., 2006; Lonin & Montrul, 2010; Rinnert et al., 2015), the efficacy of feedback (Cohen, 1991; Kang & Han, 2015; Reid, 1994), corpus studies in second language writing (Laufer & Waldman, 2011), emergent attempts to reformulate traditions of writing approaches (Raines, 1991), and assessment of writing in EAP contexts (Clapham, 2000) were some related issues which had been covered in the studies of academic writing.

EAP Curriculum Development

The issue of EAP curriculum development has been a challenging point of research for EAP practitioners and investigators. The research themes included in this issue have been some moot point like standard variety

of English in academic contexts, preparing materials for EAP students, the discussions of English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) and English for Specific Academic English (ESAP), and needs analysis which are discussed below.

Standard Variety of English in Academic Contexts. One of the major issues attracted by the EAP researchers has been the use of Standard English variety in academic environments. This tendency of one variety of English in EAP practices has shown to have some contrasting consequences. Liyanage and Walker (2014), for instance, asserted that this movement had been a failure “to grasp the dynamic nature of language, but also sits uneasily in an environment suffused by the rhetoric of internationalization”. They believed that the internationalization helped the students brought their local experiences and cultures into the university classrooms and constructed ways of embedding local values in so-called standard variety of English. If not, the students’ local variety was considered as inferior comparing to the dominant paradigms of knowledge constructing. Additionally, it confined students from exposing different varieties of English in schools and universities while created limited opportunities for representing themselves within the dominant discourse (Liyanage & Walker, 2014). Changing this trend has faced difficulties: the teacher education system is not adapted to the current internationalization movement, the educational system leaves little space for

diversity of academic practices and world of Englishes, and the current teachers are the students of this educational systems and few of them have experienced different systems. Therefore, it is needed to provide opportunities for recognizing the dynamicity of English and experiencing the emergence of world Englishes to the academic settings and practices (Liyanage & Walker, 2014). It is also possible to draw forth from the translingual pedagogy suggested by Canagarajah (2012) to build hybrid academic practices, destruct the monolithic standard variety, and make space for the negotiation of variant communicative practices. Other similar pedagogical models such as metrolingualism, biliteracy, and code-meshing (Hornberger, 2003; Pennycook, 2010; Young, 2004) were also used to voice the local languages in multilingual countries and contexts. These concepts help the students make a connection between their local needs and global demands (Bhattarai, 1999).

Preparing English Resources. Following the establishment and popularity of EAP as a branch of ELT, various research studies have been devoted to the issues related to the EAP practices across different countries and universities, the typical EAP models across different countries, and feasibility of EAP practices over EFL/ESL contexts. To have a curriculum covering appropriate EAP practices in universities, some factors such as students’ needs, EFL/ESL or native contexts, local/western programs or a mixed of both for EAP practices, the English MOI

academic courses, western/hybrid models of EAP practices, and the educational reformation should be considered in advance (Gao & Bartlett, 2014). The researchers such as Stoller (1999) announced that the time for using discrete-skills approaches in EAP programs had turned away in favor of hybrid curriculum for EAP including content-based instruction to meet the students' academic inspirations and content-learning demands.

One of the problems related to the use of English as the MOI is the limited English resources for some specific academic majors. Preparing EAP courses is not a simple and an easy-to-use recipe for instructors and educational stakeholders. The policy makers and educational deciders are the major agents in proposing and determining the EAP courses for universities. Ashraf et al. (2014) explained that in contexts such as Pakistan in which Urdu is the formal language for education in universities, the shift to English as MOI was welcomed just in some specific majors as the English resources for all the majors were not available or limited to translated versions. This problem along with the teacher education deficiencies, students' educational background, and transition shock from Urdu to English problematize the use of English as MOI in higher education (Ashraf et al., 2014). To solve this problem, researchers suggest the use of more than one language for input and tasks as a reasonable discursive practice in bi/multilingual contexts (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011). This suggestion helps the strengthening balance between English and other local languages in academic practices.

However, most of the researchers tend to explicate those curricula which present those educational and communicative skills which students in higher education need to achieve their educational goals through the medium of English (Gillet, 2004). This tendency, as Ashraf et al., (2014) noted, led to the emergence of EAP courses such as "Communication Skills in English, Functional English, Technical Writing, and Business Communication" as compulsory courses in undergraduate students' programs for supporting their academic English skills in higher levels of postgraduate. However, still researchers observe that EAP practices in plurilingual countries have not located the permissible place.

English for General/Specific Academic Purposes. The distinction of English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) and English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) is an unresolved issue in designing curriculum for EAP students. The former focuses on the academic communicative skills for students enrolling in any field while the latter relates to the discipline-specific requirements (Blue, 1988). The researchers such as Spack (1988) favored EGAP, Hyland (2002a) advocated ESAP. They argued that in cases of diverse fields of study and high population of students, EGAP might be more appealing and economical, and in places where content teachers and EAP had close and strong relations for discussing the requirements of students studying various fields of study ESAP could be more helpful (Harwood & Petric',

2011). Recent studies, however, have shown that disciplines have their own discourses variant from each other, favoring teaching ESPA (Hyland, 2000; Swales et al., 1998; Thompson, 2003).

The cooperation of content and EAP teachers was reported to be important in designing syllabi, course development, and team teaching; however, as Barron (2002) noted, some factors such as the institutional contexts, methodological differences, power relation with little space for EAP teachers' voices, and in general, differences in teaching philosophies impacted on the level of cooperation. In reality, however, those who decide about the specificity or generality of EAP "do not always take as much account of research findings in the field as they should" (Harwood & Petric', 2011); hence, it is required to be research-based and decide based on the students' needs and the teachable academic skills rather than then the national and institutional constraints.

Needs Analysis and/or Right Analysis. The issue of needs analysis is the cornerstone of designing syllabi, assigning learning goals and tasks, selecting texts, and developing materials as well as evaluating students and programs (Cameron, 1998; Carkin, 2005). However, this issue has faced some challenges over the years: the meaning of needs analysis (Belcher, 2006), the target group for whom the needs analysis should be conducted, the instruments that should be used (Jordan, 1997) and the people who have right to identify

needs (West, 1994). In addition, learners' preferences, language proficiencies, target communicative contexts, and reasons of taking courses should also be considered as important factors in needs analysis (Hyland, 2006). This tendency towards learners made the scholars talk of rights analysis instead of needs analysis, allowing the learners to be involved in the process of designing what is supposed to be covered in their EAP classes (Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2006; Benesch, 2001).

Critical EAP

Along with the appearance of critical pedagogy in ELT, critical EAP has also found its way in the field (Strong, 2015). This area of research includes challenging issues like critical thinking and pragmatism which are explained in the following sections.

Critical Thinking. Critical thinking as an illustration of critical pedagogy has also observed to be important in EAP. Critical thinking is characterized as a reasonable analysis and synthesis of educational practices to attain desirable outcomes (Atkinson, 1997). This critical development of thinking skills embedded in the EAP courses is helpful in enhancing language learning skills. Gunawardena and Petraki (2014) believed that "the role of critical thinking has been at the heart of a controversial debate in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) circles, dividing Western and non-Western education". They pointed out that EAP was identified as an appropriate

area for practicing critical thinking skills because of the students' experiences in doing problem-solving activities and their intellectual maturity. The researchers also reported that the critical thinking was an ideal notion for Western education and non-Western education lacked it obviously (Durkin, 2008). Kumaravadivelu (2003) related this deficiency of non-Western education to the limited English language communicative skills and, of course, the cultural differences. To make it in a scientific framework, Gunawardena and Petraki (2014) studied the challenges and difficulties that Sri Lankan teachers face in implementing a Western-oriented critical thinking pedagogy in a non-Western education setting.

Though the researchers affirmed that critical thinking can facilitate enhancing language learning in EAP classrooms, some researchers such as Atkinson (1997) and Pennycook (1999, 2001) cautioned the practitioners to the problems and challenges posed by the practice of critical thinking in the non-Western classrooms. They noted that cultural norms, social values, religion, and cultural values complicated the process of critical thinking practices. Gunawardena and Petraki (2014) criticized such views and argued that such studies were conducted in Western contexts with the participation of some non-Western students. They continued that the non-Western teachers had solid knowledge of the critical thinking skills and confirmed that the critical thinking was composed of some interrelated skills commonly observable in the teaching

practices of EAP teachers. However, in line with what Kumaravadivelu (2003) noted, Gunawardena and Petraki (2014) reported that "students' limited English language skills hinder their understanding or application of critical thinking". It is also acknowledged that the students' limited knowledge of vocabulary and grammatical competence interfered with the students' comprehension of input, impeding students' development of critical thinking skills. Another issue is related to the teachers' education. Kumaravadivelu (2003) reported that teachers in non-Western education were not managed to be trained for critical pedagogies, making them unable to be proficient language teacher and critical thinkers at the same time. Those EAP pedagogies heavily relied on the translation of texts, teacher-dependent, memorization-oriented, and teaching-for-testing movements could be helpful in engaging students' in problem-solving activities and developing their critical thinking (Gunawardena & Petraki, 2014).

Pragmatism. The issue of pragmatism in EAP has also been attractive to the researchers. For Allison (1996), pragmatism is conformity of students to the predetermined roles in their educational programs. This pragmatic view was criticized by researchers (Benesch, 1996; Pennycook, 1990), for they believed that establishing academic communicative competence reflected ideological conformity in practice. Likewise, Chowdhury and Kamal (2014) questioned the pragmatic

approach towards EAP and pointed out that “EAP pragmatism paradoxically denies both learners and teachers’ own voices within a dominant culture”. This monolithic ideology along with unified EAP practices are more aimed to be conformist rather than reformist while the acceptable alternate approach should include contextualizing EAP practices adaptable to the identified educational goals of inculcated in the practitioners’ and scholars’ possibilities and constraints (Allison, 1996). Therefore, instead of a pragmatic approach which views students as passive recipients of knowledge, a critical approach is more workable (Chowdhury and Kamal, 2014). This approach, as Pennycook (1990) and Benesch (2001) emphasized, consists of critical needs analysis of the learners, training critical learners as the agents of change, critical teachers sensitive to the unchanged institutional policies, and critical views towards the socially constructed knowledge by the policy makers. This approach critiques the accommodationist stance of EAP and tends to consider socio-political contexts of teaching and learning as well as social identities of students and teachers (Benesch, 1993; 2009). A synthesis of both critical and pragmatic approach – critical-pragmatic approach – was recommended by Chowdhury and Kamal (2014). They acknowledge both sides and emphasized the importance of exposing students’ to the norms and conventions of dominant discourse and at the same time the students’ right to have choices of their own. This mild view was literally

proposed by Pennycook (1994), explaining that instead of leaving students to decision making, we need to make a connection between language and the economic and social standards and then problematizes the various statuses that the languages might present to the students. In this way, the vulnerabilities of pragmatism can be lowered (Chowdhury & Kamal, 2014). One of the criticisms of critical EAP stemmed from those who believe that this movement tended to be theoretical rather than practical (Johnston, 1999). This critic was responded by Benesch (2001) by offering theoretical and practical issues, describing critical teaching, learning, and associated tasks in EAP classes. He noted that if critical EAP could not be appropriate for local practices and did not address the learners’ needs and rights in any EAP class, it was regarded as nothing. The same viewpoints are given by Guardado and Light (2017).

CONCLUSION

All of the issues given in this paper reflect the attempts devoted for meeting the students’ demands for EAP as a way of preparing them for the programs with MOI and, certainly, assisting them for studying abroad and understanding those lectures delivered by native speakers. Gao and Bartlett (2014) optimistically suggested that through the cooperation of academic instructors, college teachers, students, administrators, and policy makers it was possible to provide opportunities for English education reforms over the worlds. It was also an attempt to

list the most challenging issues in the area of EAP over the years of publications. However, there have been some important topics which are of utmost importance for EAP teachers and students. Academic vocabulary (Coxhead, 2000; Hyland & Tse, 2007), lexical bundles (Hyland, 2008), and EAP tests and assessment (Ertürk & Mumford, 2016; Hamilton et al., 1993; Jensen & Hansen, 1995; Lumley, 1993) are the research topics investigated by EAP researchers. Findings of these studies are advantageous for theory production and practical uses.

The analysis, however, showed that some points of research have not received due attention and in some cases they were almost overlooked by the researchers. One of the main issues almost overlooked by the researchers in EAP has been the oral/aural skills (Huang, 2006). This gap of research in EAP has been acknowledged by Ferris (1998) and Ferris and Tagg (1996a, 1996b) as they found out that university instructors emphasized that the university students need to participate in discussions and have oral presentation that mostly associated with their listening and speaking skills rather than mere knowledge of reading and writing. Interestingly, the higher preference for receptive skills was reported by Christison and Krahnke (1986), as they studied the non-native students' perceptions of EAP programs, in and out of class experiences in relation to their academic abilities, and the academic skills required for participating in class discussions and presentations.

Another important issue that researchers should take into account is the abundance of research on non-English speaking countries in which English is the MOI or at least is important in tertiary education, while, as Hyland (2006) acknowledged, because of heterogeneity of population, there are some native English speakers who need necessary education in academic communication skills. And, the last not the least point can be related the commonalities of EAP and ESP in some specific directions which are helpful in educating students. For instance, an EAP course, in addition to the materials associated with the students' disciplinary studies, can include those skills directly related to the professional preparation of the students (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001). This coincidence can be considered in different departments for more helpful cooperation.

Finally, the issues and challenges elaborated in this paper helped EAP to be matured as a field, and see itself responsible for equipping students to hold new roles both in academic and cultural contexts (Hyland, 2006). However, as it was repeatedly noted, the concerns and issues are still unresolved and further research is needed for responding to them. Therefore, as noted by Harwood and Petric' (2011) and revealed in the present review, the issues such as the efficacy of different EAP programs, training programs for EAP teacher education, the relationship between EAP and second language acquisition, the analysis of the contexts in which the academic texts are

produced rather than the mere analysis and description of the texts, the study of language in use besides productive skills, and multidisciplinary approaches to EAP, and EAP assessment are salient for EAP scholars which need to be studied more in future.

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