University of Groningen

Teaching English to second language learners in academic contexts

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Published in:
System

DOI:
[10.1016/j.system.2018.07.015](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2018.07.015)

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2018

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Peng, H. (2018). Teaching English to second language learners in academic contexts: Reading, writing, listening, and speaking. *System*, 77, 108-110. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2018.07.015>

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In sum, the book presents the status-quo of Chinese teachers' and researchers' endeavor for innovations in ELT, covering a wide range of topics such as assessment, independent learning, EAP, and IC. The studies showcase pedagogical innovations from not only elite universities but also local universities. The chapters highlight challenges and provide suggestions for future ELT in China. I will recommend the book to graduate students, EFL teachers and researchers in China and in other EFL contexts with similar constraints and challenges. The volume is also insightful for readers interested in language learning, teaching and assessing in China. As acknowledged by the editors, China is massive in terms of its size and has the considerable diversity in needs across the country. It is impossible to cover all aspects of innovation in Chinese EFL context in a single volume. However, the project would provide a more comprehensive and up-to-date view if the book could include more innovative pedagogical approaches and models initiated from China, for example, the production-oriented approach (Wen, 2016), the continuation framework and the China Standard of English (see Ren and Liu, 2016 for detail). In addition, all the empirical studies focus on EFL at tertiary levels. It reflects the situation of research on EFL learning and teaching, or more generally the field of Applied Linguistics. It would be more inspiring to include studies at elementary and secondary levels.

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2018.07.012>

***Teaching English to second language learners in academic contexts: Reading, writing, listening, and speaking*, J. Newton, D. Ferris, C. Goh, W. Grabe, F. Stoller, L. Vandergrift. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, New York (2018), 433**

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) aims to equip students with communicative skills to participate in particular academic contexts, specifically the ability to read, write, listen, and speak English for study purposes. As English becomes a leading language for the dissemination of academic knowledge, the number of EAP learners has rapidly expanded, which in turn leads to a similar expansion in the number of EAP teachers. However, many—probably most—of the EAP teachers are not native speakers of English and often lack the knowledge of teaching the communicative skills. As such, the current volume *Teaching English to second language learners in academic contexts: Reading, writing, listening, and speaking* is a timely contribution. After reading this book, I, a novice English teacher, have acquired a set of instruction techniques, and, as a young language researcher, I have also understood better how to apply research-based findings into classroom instruction.

This volume highlights the importance of skills-based instruction in EAP contexts. Authors of this book, all experts on language-skill development, remind the reader about four elements that underpin effective skills-based language teaching: motivation, meaningful language use, language knowledge, and metacognitive awareness. Readers could read detailed discussion on these issues throughout the book.

Readers may find the sections that address four language skills (i.e. reading, writing, listening and speaking) exceedingly useful, as they provide EAP teachers with a toolkit for effective skills-based instruction, particularly the techniques for instruction and assessment. For example, the reading section gives answers to eleven questions regarding reading comprehension, and some also baffle me often, such as why L2 reading abilities differ so much from person to person. By relating to answers to these questions, readers could easily understand the nature of skilled reading as a complex cognitive and contextually supported ability. Factors accounting for the varied reading abilities are also explained: learner background, language proficiency and task types.

A more inspiring part of this section might be how to apply twelve evidence-based principles to guide the reading curricular design, a process that aims to help students become motivated, skilled and strategic readers. In line with this

application, specific instructional activities are offered and ready for EAP teachers to integrate in their teaching practice directly. Besides, two techniques for assessment are also discussed here: assessment *of* learning and assessment *for* learning. As such, EAP teachers, who are usually also language researchers, might greatly advance their understanding of the nature, instruction and assessment of reading comprehension.

As a researcher interested in learner autonomy, I found myself excited in reading the writing section, as it proposes a more learner-centered approach to L2 writing instruction. It first displays the differences between L2 writing and L1 writing in terms of the writing system, background knowledge, learning contexts and learner characteristics, and then provides a set of suggested steps necessary for effective L2 writing courses. In view of the distinct features of L2 writing and challenges of developing writing skill, Ferris, author of this section, gives suggestions on how to enable L2 writers to self-regulate their learning and writing processes. I was expecting to read some suggestions involving the use of technology in language instruction. From my personal research experience, technologies are beneficial for language learners, especially in their self-regulated learning. In such cases, learners could take more control of their learning and hence develop their learning autonomy. However, this section does not touch upon the use of technology in writing instruction. According to Ferris, the instructional activities that work best for L2 writing classes should accentuate peer feedback, teacher feedback and learners' self-evaluation. Practical suggestions for writing evaluation and assessment are thus provided. Simply put, to help students become skilled and strategic writers, L2 writing instructors need to acknowledge the differences between L2 writing and L1 writing, design courses to facilitate learner response, and apply effective assessing rubrics.

The effectiveness of different instructional designs (e.g. product-oriented or process-oriented) has long been debated (Atkinson, Derry, Renkl, & Wortham, 2000). Continuing the discussion, this book adopts a process-oriented approach to L2 listening instruction. Three accounts of listening processes are provided: top-down and bottom-up processing, controlled and automatic processing, and the reiterative process of perception, parsing and utilization. In line with the process-oriented approach, several pedagogical principles for listening curriculum are proposed, concerning specifically how to impart processes for comprehension and learning, select suitable tasks and texts, and provide a large amount of listening experience. Still, the most practical and beneficial part for EAP teachers might be the suggestions on instructional activities for improving listening skills, for EAP teachers are confronted with problems to translate abstract curriculum principles into concrete learning activities or tasks. Further, techniques for assessing listening performance and listening development are introduced respectively. The distinction between assessment *of* learning and assessment *for* learning is also emphasized in the reading section. Therefore, readers may like to read more comments that compare different ways of assessing reading and listening, which could advance their understanding of whether and how reading assessment and listening assessment differ from each other.

This speaking section thrills me the most, as it embraces the idea of incorporating technology into classroom instruction. Other than merely relying on teachers' teaching, Newton, author of this section, also argues for learners' self-regulation in skills-based instruction, more often with the help of technologies. Incorporating technology into skills-based instruction would be a big step from Nation's (2009) *Teaching ESL/EFL Reading and Writing* and Nation and Newton's (2009) *Teaching ESL/EFL Listening and Speaking*, which similarly offered research-driven practical guidelines for language teachers to teach the four basic skills. However, the illustration of technology incorporation in this volume tends to be vague, merely describing the resources/technologies available but providing no operational suggestions. More elaboration on how to incorporate the technology into skills-based instruction may benefit readers more, as they could apply these techniques directly to their teaching practice.

While echoing the learner-centered approach to L2 writing instruction in this volume, this section simultaneously underscores three distinct features of speaking: interactivity, variability and transience, and its physical nature, which lay the foundation for the pedagogy considered here, especially the role of interaction, corrective feedback and practice in speaking instruction. Accordingly, a number of instructional activities are offered, centering on cooperative learning, task-based teaching, technology, and intercultural learning opportunities, with a view to developing spoken accuracy, conversational ease, reasoning skills, formal speaking, and fluency.

Collectively, this book provides a set of instructional activities and assessment options, with regard to reading, writing, listening, and speaking respectively. EAP teachers could apply them directly to their teaching practice. My biggest concern about this volume would be how to evaluate these tasks, activities, and assessment techniques. More guidance on developing appropriate scoring criteria would be a further asset for EAP teachers.

A commentary at the end wraps up the themes that have been addressed in each skill-specific section: integrated skills teaching, practice, fluency, collaborative learning, strategic language use, effective assessment and feedback, and technology incorporation. To summarize, this volume features the fundamental knowledge that EAP teachers need to better teach the four language skills. Besides, readers may find the structure of this volume easy to follow, as the four sections that address different skills are organized in a consistent manner, following a similar order from theoretical accounts to pedagogical principles and then to specific instructional activities. Considering that the four skills are discussed separately in four sections, more transitional comments between sections might benefit readers more and also improve the coherence of the whole book. Another noteworthy point is that this volume is written in clear and simple language. Readers may feel grateful for this and also for the practical tasks and questions the authors leave in each chapter for readers to reflect and review the themes

discussed. For those in need of a richer understanding of each skill, the recommended reading at the end of each chapter might prove beneficial.

Ignoring some editorial mistakes, this well-structured book addresses a wide range of issues concerning skills-based EAP instruction, such as theoretical underpinnings, pedagogical principles, curriculum guidance, instructional activities, and assessment options, which have enormously enriched my understanding of the nature, instruction, and assessment of the four skills in EAP contexts. It is undoubtedly an important guidance book for language teachers and curriculum designers, in EAP and ESL in general.

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2018.07.015>

***Grounded theory in applied linguistics research: A practical guide*, Gregory Hadley. Routledge, Abingdon (2017). xiii + 183 pp.**

Towards the beginning of Gregory Hadley's 2017 book, the author notes that grounded theory method (GTM) has experienced 'marginalization and mistrust' (p. 4) within the field of applied linguistics. This dynamic, in contrast to other fields of applied social science in which GTM has become one of the most frequently deployed qualitative research methodologies, has been fueled by applied linguistics' fundamentally quantitative origins, a lack of discussion within more general overviews of research methods in the field, and researchers claiming GTM to be based on erroneous or partial understanding. This background also goes some way to explaining the reasons why applied linguistics has had to wait until now for this first book-length exploration of GTM with specific reference to our field. It also helps us to understand the importance of the book as Hadley sets about showing his target audience of graduate students, their supervisors and other researchers how it is done.

Given Hadley's intended readership, I am in some ways ideally placed to offer a review. I am a relatively novice qualitative researcher working in the field of applied linguistics. I am moving into the second year of my doctoral studies, slowly pulling together a coherent research proposal and attempting to make an informed decision in terms of my methodological approach. I have been intrigued by GTM—Charmaz's (2014) constructivist version in particular—but as I read various handbooks and overviews, I often found myself wondering; what would this look like in a study like mine? This book offered a practical answer.

Hadley's work rewards start-to-finish reading, at least the first time around, as complex but useful metaphors and philosophical concepts are returned to throughout the book. The text is divided into two main parts: 'Understanding grounded theory', which focuses on the philosophical and historical underpinnings of GTM, and 'Doing grounded theory', which leads us through the practical steps that constitute a rigorous GTM study.

The introduction includes not only what a reader would normally expect (an overview of the topic, structure and aims of the book) but also a great deal of practical advice designed to help readers soberly assess whether GTM is right for them and their particular context. Importantly, Hadley highlights the fact that GTM is an advanced research methodology better suited to those who have already undertaken some qualitative research. He also emphasises the importance of considering the researcher's contextual affordances and constraints before embarking on a GTM project, including a very useful self-diagnostic that will help readers gauge their own readiness.

Hadley delays launching into the origins of GTM, instead leading the novice researcher through an overview of different research paradigms and their associated ontological, epistemological and methodological beliefs and practices. This is important as many graduate students, myself included, often tend to fall into research paradigms based on the dominant beliefs of their chosen sub-field or department, without stopping to think about what might be offered by alternative