

The New Template for Developing EAP Textbooks for SAMT

Preliminaries

We assume that the EAP textbooks are going to be designed for Iranian undergraduate university students majoring in the corresponding academic fields. The target students are assumed to have attained a level of proficiency in English ranging from a pre-intermediate to an optimal intermediate. We build on the premise in the current EAP reading research holding that learners should be provided with ample opportunities in EAP textbooks in order to develop reading skills and strategies. While certain enabling reading skills and strategies of more general nature are already consolidated throughout the general English courses, here, the EAP students should be granted the confidence and practice to transfer them to their academic reading tasks as a good point of departure. Further, a sizable space should be preserved to familiarize the learners with the reading skills and strategies that are most effectively deployed in their target academic disciplines (Atai & Nazari, 2011). Thus, all the tasks and activities should be geared to the reading requirements of their discipline-specific text types/ genres. With the main focus on reading, therefore, the other language skills and components (i.e. vocabulary, grammar, discourse, and genre) are used as a springboard for fostering the reading skills and strategies in question.

Selection of Content

We suggest around 14 units for each textbook on themes which enjoy disciplinary relevance and maximum authenticity. The texts should represent the typical text types and genres the learners will encounter during their current university program and subsequent studies. We seriously recommend our colleagues of both subject departments and ELT departments to compile good banks of texts and proceed with screening texts following the stages and criteria well- illustrated in Tomlinson (2003).

Layout of EAP books

For maximum clarity, this template is illustrated by a real sample unit developed for the students of medicine. We invite the prospective authors to read this template together with that unit.

The core of each unit is two reading passages developing the same theme; all activities of each unit are specifically related to that theme. In this vein, they focus on both the relevant content and language. To resonate content relevance to the audience addressed, we highly recommend the authors to choose the subheadings, which are supposed to be used consistently in all the units of each book, in such a way that the very subheadings may trigger a linguistic-disciplinary

integrated response on the learners' part. The subheadings introduced here in this template are based on the field of medicine. For example, the medical term "*check up*" is chosen as a substitute for the conventional term "*pre-reading*" in order to stimulate a sense of readiness (Tomlinson, 2003) for the oncoming reading experience. After all, the medical students try to check the vital signs and some dominant symptoms quite quickly prior to making any diagnosis!

Reading 1

Check up

The unit begins with two or three tasks or activities relevant to the content of the reading. The aim is to engage students mentally and to attract their attention to the content so that they can connect it to their personal life experiences. In the meantime, the learners may all have the chance to activate their background knowledge, but they are not assumed to answer the questions correctly. These activities are different from "*warm ups*" in that they are primarily intended to get the learners to think rather than to talk on the topic. This could be achieved as the students recount episodes from their lives, share their knowledge and experiences, or make predictions. For instance, in the sample unit, as the text is on obesity, the students are required to measure their own body mass index (BMI) to see whether they are normal, overweight, or obese (see the sample unit for the students of medicine).

Through the check up activities, readiness is also achieved via a preliminary focus on vocabulary items. The choice of the vocabulary is guided by the major contribution they make to the content of the reading text.

Reading passage

Attempts should be made to find and screen the most interesting, up-to-date, and authentic texts which may pose an optimal dose of linguistic challenge to the students. These passages may be adapted from a variety of authentic and credible sources such as encyclopedias, academic journals, published textbooks, popularized magazines, and registered and authorized academic/professional websites. We would like to remind the authors about working for a good balance between serious academic texts and popularized texts. The latter lose their credibility very soon!

To facilitate personal engagement while reading and aid comprehension, certain experiential activities (Tomlinson, 2003) may be included within the text placed in the margins. These while reading activities are of two main types:

1. Referencing to the words glossed in the margin

The choice of the glossed vocabulary is guided by both their frequency level and their functional significance in the text. In other words, the vocabulary items which are not within the frequency levels appropriate for pre-intermediate and intermediate learners— ranging from 2000 to 3000 most common written word families in the General Service Word List (Longman Corpus, 2009) — and are not among academic vocabularies but are crucial to reading comprehension should be defined or exemplified in the glosses to the reading passages. In fact, since, the vocabulary ranging from 2000 to 3000 most common written word families (W2 and W3) and academic vocabulary as important vocabulary are dealt with in the section devoted to vocabulary development in each unit (“*Vocabulary Shot*”), those beyond the W2-W3 range are only presented and defined in the glosses.

2. Responding to the questions and comments placed in the margin

This type of activity is to facilitate individual reader’s processing. Hence, it is done on an individual basis rather than on either pair or group work. Besides, it is not meant to add complexity to the task.

Besides the words in the margins, we highly recommend that **technical vocabulary** items should not be left untouched. Rather, they can be boldfaced in the text and defined in the end notes immediately following the passage under the heading of “----- notes” (e.g. Medicine notes). This is to facilitate comprehension through referencing while reading.

Digest what you read

This section which follows the while-reading experience has two main purposes.

1. One purpose is to assess the reader’s comprehension of the text through some tasks and typical comprehension questions. The comprehension questions which may be of true/false, Yes/No, alternatives, multiple choice or Wh-question types check the readers’ different levels of comprehension including literal, reorganization, inference, prediction, evaluation, and personal response (Day and Park, 2005). It should be mentioned that literal comprehension—**the lowest processing level**— is not the main focus of the comprehension check activities unless it gains significance with reference to the discipline-specific reading requirements of the field. For example, scanning as the focused reading strategy requires reference to the information literally cited in the text. The reading comprehension questions, however, are not confined to the conventional forms mentioned above. Considerable space is devoted to tasks as vehicles serving a two-folded purpose: assessment and consolidation. We highly encourage the authors to

keep to the framework cited above but feel free to gear their tasks to the nature of the field/discipline.

2. The other one is to consolidate the learners' comprehension of the text. This purpose is achieved mainly through a variety of task types such as information gap, opinion gap, reasoning gap, jigsaw, problem solving, information transfer, etc. (Willis & Willis, 2007; Skehan, 2003; Nunan, 2004). As an example presented in the sample unit, an information transfer task may incorporate visual representation of two types of weight-loss surgery to be labeled by the reader based on the information presented in the text. This task involves both assessment and consolidation of text comprehension.

Besides the comprehension check questions, the “*digest what you read*” section includes three other main parts. These are foci on reading strategy training, vocabulary development, and grammar which are elaborated as follows:

- ***Reading strategy***

Reading strategy instruction is enhanced in a number of ways: (a) the choice of strategies which are helpful in discipline-specific contexts, as an example, scanning a patient case report (Atai & Nazari, 2011), (b) discipline-specific reading tasks, and (c) explicit instruction and tips which are to be utilized while the reader is entangled with reading problems. The reading strategy in question should be deployed with reference to the reading passage. There is also a further chance to put it into practice immediately after the instruction and the text-bound exercise through a discipline-oriented task.

- ***Vocabulary shot***

In this section, vocabulary items within the frequency levels appropriate for pre-intermediate and intermediate learners— ranging from 2000 to 3000 most common written word families (W2 and W3) in the General Service Word List (Longman Corpus, 2009) – and academic vocabulary which appear in the text should be dealt with. There should be an attempt all through the activities to shed light on the different aspects of vocabulary knowledge. The aspects of word knowledge include meaning, collocations, grammatical features, word parts, and register (Nation, 2001; Zimmerman, 2010). Such multi-dimensional approach should be accomplished through both explicit instructions and task-based activities within the framework advocated by Schmitt and Schmitt (2005). This framework embraces five main instructional phases namely selective attention, meaning recognition, manipulation, interpretation, and finally production. Thus, these types of activities especially the first four are recommended for the vocabulary part of units.

More specifically, the vocabulary shot section opens with an explicit description of a vocabulary learning strategy or an important aspect of vocabulary knowledge related to the text at hand. Then, the application of the very strategy or aspect of vocabulary learning is emphasized. However, all the vocabulary shot activities are utilized as opportunities to put the targeted W2-W3 and academic vocabulary presented in the preceding reading passage(s) into practice. To this end, various aspects of the word knowledge such as word families, multiple meanings, collocations, etc. are tackled through a wide range of student-friendly tasks and exercises.

Finally, the reader is given a warning shot, in a section titled *'Take a look'*. This final drop is meant to raise students' awareness of a discipline-specific vocabulary item to which readers have already been exposed to in the reading passage. It is commonly noticed by teachers that without a chance to magnify the specialized use of the word and a space to highlight it in practice, the significance of the word in that field might go unnoticed. As an example, in the sample unit on medicine, the multiple meanings of the word 'maintain' extracted from the reading text are presented.

It is worth mentioning that some aspects of vocabulary knowledge may be treated strategically providing explicit information, exemplification, as well as practical hints and tips, to name a few. For instance, collocations may be presented through the strategy of "word mapping".

- ***Grammar injection***

Grammar should be dealt with via a discovery approach, whereby the opportunity to raise learners' consciousness about grammar choice (Thompson, 2004; Larsen-Freeman, 2003) is enhanced. To this end, the choice of discipline-specific genres is an aid. For instance, 'passive constructions' may be introduced by, derived from, and practiced through different genres and subgenres depending on the field.

The grammar structure dealt with in every unit must be drawn from the reading text and must be appropriate for the learners with regard to the difficulty level.

Reading 2

The second reading passage provides a further opportunity to practice reading. Also, it is intended to assist the learners with recycling the reading strategies, parts of the content, vocabulary, and the grammar focus of the first reading passage while it introduces new content and a comparatively smaller range of vocabulary. Reading 2 should be selected on the same theme as the first passage in the unit. This gives the reader the chance to experience wide reading. Although the general theme is shared with the first reading passage, the topic may be more specific, the text may be shorter, the genre may be preferably different, and the load of activities prior to and following it should be considerably lower. For example, the first passage may be selected from an academic textbook and the second one from an online journal.

As for vocabulary, again the focus is on the important vocabulary of the second reading passage, i.e. W2 and W3 and academic vocabulary. Yet, the activities following Reading 2 may be less controlled and mostly of productive type. The vocabulary exercise(s) may even provide more flexible processing of the same major vocabulary point already introduced in Reading 1 (e.g. collocations, affixes, grouping words, etc.).

Translation

The translation activity which winds up the second reading section can contribute to the learners' reading practice as comprehending the text may be the prerequisite to translating it (Atai, 2001). Also, the activity offers a focused practice on either vocabulary or grammar content presented in the unit. Thus, it can help the learners internalize the grammatical structure and/or vocabulary knowledge of the unit the activities reinforce. Further, the section may provide the learners with some practical and simple non-technical tips on translation (ibid). A hint may be inserted as to the possible differences/similarities between English and Persian in terms of the grammatical structure. What is more, the choice of the genre, (e.g. the abstract section of an article, a case report, etc.) may familiarize the learners with a discipline-specific genre and bring more authenticity to the translation section.

Self-Check

To give the learners a sense of achievement, the unit ends up with a "*self-check*". The main objectives of the unit may be worded explicitly by means of performative verbs. Beginning the statements with the expression of *I can* is meant to contribute to the sense of accomplishment. It is easily operationalized by giving the learners the chance to stop for a few minutes and reflect on their learning process through the unit.

Finally, to extend the opportunity to learn beyond the confines of the classroom environment, the learners should be encouraged to take a step further and do project work, read, or even listen extensively guided by the coursebook but on a self-oriented basis. This process will aid them to consolidate the content and language they have been exposed to through each unit. Also, being mainly learner-centered, the task is highly motivating and may enhance independent learning. For example, in a unit the learners may be assigned a task to search for further examples of collocational phrases with a hint on dictionary use. The challenge would give them fresh impetus to ascertain their readiness for an up-coming learning experience—that is, improving their dictionary referencing skills.

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