
Review of *LEAP: Learning English for Academic Purposes* (*Reading and Writing*)

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LEAP: Learning English for Academic Purposes (Reading and Writing) is one book in Pearson's series of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) for high-intermediate and advanced learners. The book has eight chapters which cover topics in different fields, for example education, psychology, business, and biology. Each chapter deals with both reading and writing skills. A consistent format is adopted throughout all chapters, starting with an overview (that describes the objectives and features of the chapter), followed by a "Gearing –Up" activity (that aims to activate and build learners' schema), reading (that intends to provide input), and writing (for language production). The book dedicates a separate part "Vocabulary Build" in each chapter to building learners' awareness and repertoire of words having high usage frequency in the Academic Word List. It also includes other sections such as "Focus on Reading", "Focus on Writing", and "Academic Survival Skills" which provide explicit instructions on developing reading and writing skills in academic settings. In addition, the book offers learners information of online support for learners'

further practice and provides credits for the presented materials.

The above mentioned format shows that, in general, the book adopts the traditional Present-Practice-Produce model, where target items are presented, practiced and then produced. To be more specific, the content that learners need to acquire is first presented and practiced through activities on reading and vocabulary, and then produced through those on writing. Because of this model, learners are carefully prepared for practice and provided with chance to consolidate their acquisition. More importantly, this book shows a strong link between reading and writing, which is a typical feature of academic writing. In this book, writing always follows reading and is closely related to the reading content, and learners have to write based on what they read. As Laufer and Hulstijn (2001) pointed out, vocabulary acquisition depends upon learners' involvement in processing new words, i.e. whether they know they need those words, or have to search for and evaluate them. The strong link between reading and writing the book offers learners

a purpose to read and to build vocabulary, as they know input from the reading and vocabulary parts will be needed for writing tasks that follow.

Reading and writing are the two target skills of this textbook, and they are well presented. For reading, the book covers a wide range of reading subskills, such as identifying key words, skimming, scanning, recognizing organizational patterns, relating text organization to content. Reading activities not only activate but also build schema (i.e. background knowledge), which provides the opportunity to integrate learners' previous experience and stimulate learners' interest. An example is in Chapter 5. The Overview provides learners with information about Steve Job's struggle against pancreatic cancer and two types of alternative medicine and conventional medicine (building schema), while the Gearing Up asks for learners' opinion of treatment for specific health problems (activating schema). Moreover, these activities are constructed based on a balance between top-down and bottom-up approaches. For example, the Gearing Up in each chapter asks for learners' experiences, attitudes, or opinions (top-down), and the following Vocabulary Build exposes learners to words included in reading (bottom-up). This combination promotes learning since it provides chances for learners to practice linguistic items and make learners notice the relevance of materials at the same time. Another strength of the book is its reading materials, which offer lengthy readings taken from authentic sources (textbooks, newspapers, magazines, and Web resources). Reading passages in

English as a Second or Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) classes are often short to facilitate a focus on language development and suit the class time frame. As a consequence, learners are likely to face a gap of length between what they are provided in ESL/EFL classes and what they actually read in content courses. Therefore, lengthy materials will be beneficial in preparing learners for their future content courses. Another beneficial and innovative point of the reading part in this textbook is that it presents divergent viewpoints on common topics and facilitates learners' expression of opposing ideas. For example, a reading in Chapter 6 tries to persuade readers of the danger of vaccination. Such divergence is useful because it highlights the importance of critical thinking and standing up to defend one's ideas, both of which are highly important in an academic context. Finally, the author manages to create a sense of real-life academic reading through fully referencing all readings. In my opinion, such reference not only gives learners a sense of authenticity, but also creates enthusiasm and confidence for learners. This can give students a sense of confidence since they know they can read authentic academic passages.

As for the writing part, the book adopts the process-based approach (p. iii). This approach focuses on the steps through which a piece of work is written, commented, and rewritten, and regards writing not as language reproduction but development of organization and meaning (Matsuda, 2003). In each chapter, learners are initially required to write a short essay in response to a prompt related to the previous

reading. They will receive feedback from teacher or classmates on this assignment. Then they will be given more input through two other relevant readings, vocabulary exercises, and instructions on writing, and, finally, write a final essay which may include paragraphs from the previous one they wrote. This procedure allows learners to receive feedback between drafts and look at appropriate input for their writing. The book also sets models for learners' writing in the Models chapter located at the end of the book. This chapter provides writing samples for all writing assignments, and further instructs learners on how to complete the assignments (e.g., analyzing structure of short answers, listing steps to do a survey and instructing how to write a report, using graphic organizers to illustrate the structure of a writing). Another advantage of the writing part is that it covers different writing skills which are presented in a progression of difficulty in order to foster learners' enthusiasm (Garinger, 2002). For example, learners are exposed to different genres (such as survey reports, process essays and persuasive essays) and numerous writing techniques (such as introducing examples into a text, using various sentence structures and writing definition). Another example is the final writing assignment in the last chapter which requires learners to write the longest essay (three to four pages) compared to those in the previous chapters (especially short answers in Chapter 1). This length provides learners a chance, and a challenge, to effectively integrate all skills that they have practiced so far and instructors a chance to assess learners' acquisition.

One accomplishment regarding skill development is that the book actually provides learners with skills rather than just helping them to practice. This is shown through the presentation of explicit instruction in a salient way. For example, Chapter 1 introduces some strategies of dealing with unknown words. These instructions are put in grey boxes so they can be distinguished from normal texts and ensures that learners can identify them easily. Further, the book dedicates a separate part (Academic Survival Skills) in each chapter to developing learners' academic skills. These skills cover avoiding plagiarism by using citations and references, paraphrasing, or summarizing, asking questions using correct word order, learning independently, and expressing opposing opinions. I find this part very helpful because it raises learners' awareness about some practices in tertiary academic settings.

Vocabulary building is also well developed. The book does a great job in providing a reason for learners to study new words. It does so by presenting vocabulary items with a clear marking which items are included in the Academic Word List. Another new feature, compared with other textbooks, is that it introduces learners to the idea of using a vocabulary notebook (Chapter 4, p. 83). This facilitates learners' self-study and highlights the need of studying vocabulary in context. In addition, strategies for dealing with vocabulary are presented explicitly. For example, learners are instructed on how to guess new words from context, which is highly recommended to promote analysis of reading strategies and evaluation of vocabulary alternatives

(Nassaji, 2003). Another example is that this book explicitly teaches two word forms, adjective and adverb, by either printing the words in bold type, or using abbreviation (“adv.” for adverb and “adj.” for adjective) to mark them. Such salience is needed given the fact that these important word forms are often neglected because of a common misunderstanding that learners can infer them from their nouns or verbs (Schmitt & Zimmerman, 2002). Multiword units are also covered in this part. There are numerous examples of this kind: “commit to” (phrasal verb, p. 18), “motor skills” (collocation, p. 8), and “as a result of” (formulaic expression, p. 154). Boers and Lindstromberg (2012), and Hyland (2012) emphasized the importance of attracting learners’ attention to these units since it will raise their awareness about these vocabulary items, especially in academic contexts, and improve their vocabulary acquisition as well.

Apart from the strong points discussed above, there are some shortcomings that affect the book’s effectiveness. First, it would be even more attractive to learners if instead of using an asterisk to mark which vocabulary items are included in the Academic Word List, the author used different symbols to indicate their level of usage frequency in the list. This is not an infeasible task because the Academic Word List itself has already been organized in sublists which are divided based on the criterion of usage frequency (Coxhead, 2000). Secondly, although the author tries to raise learners’ awareness about citation and reference, she does not name any specific citation and reference

style (e.g., APA or MLA) for students to follow. Explicitly introducing specific citation styles would make clear to learners that there are detailed guidelines for them to follow and they do not have to worry. Further, sample writings in the Models Chapter do not reflect citation in a commonly recognized format (she uses only footnotes to provide references instead of integral citations). I believe this will cause even more confusion to learners. Third, the book covers various topic areas, which might be too challenging for learners regarding their language production and can, therefore, discourage them. For example, Chapter 3 requires learners to write an essay to explain how a company can market a product to a target group of customers (marketing); then Chapter 6 asks them to write an essay on how vaccines stimulate the adaptive immune system and how people can evaluate information about vaccine safety (medicine). These are two completely different areas, and it is not often the case that a student majors in both of them so he or she ever has to read about these different areas.

In terms of the layout, I find myself eager and enthusiastic to use the book because of its numerous vivid visual aids such as graphic organizers and photos. Its colorful but not glossy presentation is another strong point of this book. The clear labeling of the book’s constituents, the consistent format of all chapters, and the clear introduction of the book’s structure ensure convenience for users.

In my opinion, the book generally meets the author’s objectives. As stated by the author, the book aims to bridge the gaps

between ESL/EFL programs, EAP courses, and academic content courses. These gaps are created because the length and complexity of reading materials and writing tasks in these courses are different. Through the selection of authentic materials, the introduction of numerous activities on developing academic skills and building vocabulary, and the adoption of the process-based approach, the author manages to create a feeling of real-life reading and writing in academic settings.

In terms of target audience, the series which this book belongs to is designed for high-intermediate and advanced learners. The Proficiency Guidelines for writing and reading proposed by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (2012) describe advanced writers as those being able to write long narratives or descriptions, develop arguments, as well as summarize and report facts, and advanced readers being able to understand authentic texts and derive meaning from argumentative texts. The above evaluation of the textbook content demonstrates that these characteristics are all addressed in an effective way.

In general, this book meets the objective of preparing learners for academic content courses in English. Using it will set a comprehensive foundation for learners' performance in their higher education.

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