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**ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES:
THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS**

The importance of learning English cannot be understated. English is the language of international communication, the media and the internet, so learning English is important for socialising and entertainment as well as education and work.

English language teaching and learning have long been the focus of much attention [1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7]. One of the fastest-growing areas of English language teaching is English for academic purposes. This trend has become more prominent as the number of foreign students attending universities and other institutions across the English-speaking world has increased over the last decades. Thus, the research aims at examining the main characteristics of English for academic purposes.

Commonly known as academic English, English for academic purposes entails training students, usually in a higher education setting, to use language appropriately for study. It is one of the most common forms of English for specific purposes. A program of English for academic purposes focuses instruction on skills required to perform in an English-

speaking academic context across core subject areas generally encountered in a university setting [8].

Level of English. English language level requirements vary quite a lot, but they are not as high as many people expect. In program of English for academic purposes, as well as in general English language teaching course, students usually have to reach an upper intermediate level or perhaps an advanced level before they start studying.

Exam preparation. Programs may be divided into pre-sessional courses and courses taken alongside students' other subjects. Sometimes the courses of English for academic purposes may be intended to raise students' general English levels so that they can enter university. This often means helping students get a high score in the IELTS (International English Language Testing System) examination. However, on a scale of general to academic, most practitioners of English for academic purposes would place IELTS much nearer the general end. IELTS is not officially described as an academic examination, and it does not venture far into English for academic purposes field of reading and synthesizing texts, writing referenced essays, and critical thinking.

Critical thinking. It is rather difficult for a teacher of English for academic purposes to avoid teaching this. Critical thinking involves activities like identifying the stance of a writer, connecting items across different texts, and evaluating an idea. A student who struggles to critically engage with activities like these will struggle when they start their degree, and teachers of English for academic purposes need to develop the students' critical thinking skills.

Subject knowledge. The purpose of English for academic purposes is to meet the needs of students studying at university through the medium of English. Their needs revolve around language, the four skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening), and study skills including critical thinking. The focus of English for academic purposes is not on the knowledge, or even specific language of any particular subject, but on core skills and generic language that can cover any discipline.

Subject-specific vocabulary. Most contexts of English for academic purposes are not closely concerned with teaching and learning subject-specific terms and concepts. Teachers of English for academic purposes leave that to the subject-specific experts. The materials of English for

academic purposes include core and academic language, which is generic to any discipline. The task of the practitioners of English for academic purposes is to gradually gain an understanding of the types of texts that students have to read and write in their discipline, how these texts are constructed and what language is used.

Objectivity and subjectivity. Objectivity is associated with facts. Facts, of course, are vital and necessary, but they are not sufficient. It is not the aim of university degrees to merely teach and learn facts. In response to facts, we need such thinking activities as interpretation, speculation, and evaluation. These are all subjective. Subjectivity is based around people, and people's responses vary from person to person. Subjectivity is not inferior to objectivity, it is potentially more interesting and associated with originality, which is highly-valued in academic contexts. The interface of objectivity and subjectivity lie at the heart of academic life.

Formalized learning. English for academic purposes is certainly serious because it is all about gaining and researching new knowledge, making new connections, and communicating these ideas. Communication is at the heart of English for academic purposes, and the classroom of English for academic purposes needs to reflect this. Unlike many general English language teaching contexts, a lot of this communication is done through writing, so writing and reading are very important. Speaking and listening are too, and a lot of spoken and written communication takes place in slightly formalized and conventional set-piece events such as lectures and seminars.

Summing up, there is some debate as to the best way to help students with academic English. On the one hand, students might be taught particular conventions but not expected to understand why they need to adapt their writing; a pragmatic approach. On the other hand, students might be encouraged to challenge writing conventions and only adopt them if they seem justified; a critical approach. Recently attempts have been made to try and reconcile these opposing views. A critical pragmatic approach to English for academic purposes encourages students to develop writing conventions required by universities while also encouraging them to think about the reasons why these conventions exist.

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