InForm
A journal for international foundation programme professionals

Assessment Literacy: Research and recommendations relevant to the IFP

Assessment literacy in international contexts: putting theory into practice

Authentic EAP assessment: Does joint marking of Subject assignments work?

And more ...
InForm Conference 2015
Technology enhanced learning on the IFP

We are pleased to announce the sixth annual InForm Conference will take place at the University of Reading.

The event will include presentations and workshops on themes related to international foundation and pathway programmes and provide an opportunity for interaction and sharing of practice with colleagues from the IFP community.

Saturday 11 July 2015
University of Reading
Cedars conferencing facility
Reading

Conference fee: £60.00

Registration
Please check our website for details:
www.reading.ac.uk/inform/informconference
or email inform@reading.ac.uk.

Speaker proposals
Speaker proposals are invited from professionals involved in the delivery of International Foundation and Pathway programmes. As usual, the focus should be on issues associated with teaching and learning in this sector and address the conference theme. Sessions need to appeal to tutors and course managers across the curriculum.

The deadline for speaker proposals is 30 April 2015.

Call for papers
This is a call for papers for Issue 15 of InForm.

The submission of papers is now invited for the fourteenth edition of InForm from members of the academic community associated with international foundation programmes. Issue 15 will be published in June 2015.

We are interested in articles related to the variety of academic disciplines commonly found across international foundation programmes and remind contributors that InForm is not predominantly an English language teaching journal. InForm also includes a letters page with readers’ responses to the articles included in previous editions. Letters should be no longer than 200 words.

Journal articles (of no more than 1200 words) should be sent by email to inform@reading.ac.uk by 12.00 pm on 1 May 2015.

For more information and a full writer’s guide please visit:
www.reading.ac.uk/inform

We regret that contributing authors to InForm will no longer receive payment for papers published.

If you wish to discuss an idea for an article, please email us on inform@reading.ac.uk

From the Editorial Board …

This issue of InForm presents highlights of the fifth annual InForm conference, which was held in July at the University of Kent and explored the theme: ‘Assessment as a tool for learning on the IFP. This year’s topic addressed a range of topics around the theme of assessment and international foundation students – a theme that generated a stimulating programme of presentations.

To open the conference, Dr Sara Hannam and Birgit den Outer dealt with the issue of assessment literacy in international contexts and the challenges of putting theory into practice. Our second keynote speaker, Anthony Manning from the University of Kent continued with the theme of assessment literacy by looking at the implications of EAP assessment literacy and how this can inform cross-curricular collaboration.

Continuing with the theme of collaborations, Bella Reichard and Michael Stephenson from Newcastle University look at the joint marking of assignments by EAP and subject tutors. Next, Carla Morris and Sebastien Cadinot from the University of Kent discuss the issue of dealing with online assessment and feedback. Finally, Amanda Smith looks at reading-to-writing as an alternative to the discursive exam essay.

We would like to thank the speakers and delegates who made it such a success again this year. We are also grateful to the speakers for writing up their presentations for inclusion in InForm 14, and for sharing their ideas, research and initiatives with the IFP community.

Next year, the InForm conference will return to Reading once again. We look forward to this next opportunity for members of the IFP academic community to meet to discuss the challenges inherent in our programmes and to share practice with colleagues from across the sector.

We welcome your comments, letters and contributions. To submit an article or a letter for the next issue of InForm, please email it to inform@reading.ac.uk.

Louis Rogers
Chair of the InForm Editorial Board
Assessment literacy: Research and recommendations relevant to the IFP

The density of assessment-related literature may also alienate classroom practitioners as it is written from the theoretical perspective of research academics in the field rather than from those predominantly engaged with the frontline of teaching.‘

There is a lack of reference, amongst practising EAP teachers who assess, to research associated with assessment.‘

Introduction:
Assessment Literacy is an emerging area of academic research which takes into account the skills required by stakeholders of assessment in developing, using and interpreting assessments and their results. This paper aimed to highlight possible mechanisms for sustaining and enhancing the Assessment Literacy of IFP practitioners through the broader generalisation of findings which have emerged from a recent research project on the topic of EAP Assessment Literacy.

About the authors
Dr Anthony Manning
Director of CEWL, Kent International Pathways & Kent Extra

What is Assessment Literacy?
Stiggins (1991, 1995) is generally accredited with introducing the term Assessment Literacy, the different aspects of which are summarised below:

• Approach the assessment with the full knowledge of what is being assessed;
• Understanding the purpose of assessment;

These aims were deemed to be relevant to the IFP context due to the key role of EAP provision in most IFPs
• impact of EAP on IFP progression
• relatively close interaction between EAP teachers and content tutors involved in providing IFPs.

Research Questions
The research questions which drove the research project were as follows:
• To what extent do EAP teacher views on EAP testing and assessment practices reflect language testing research and practices which comprise Assessment Literacy?
• How can EAP Assessment Literacy be sustained or enhanced?
Again, the relevance to IFPs emerged from:
• The high number of EAP practitioners engaged in EAP provision.
• The shared context of cross-curricular interaction relating to both the EAP and broader IFP fields.
• The varied training backgrounds and experiences of assessment pertaining to colleagues working in both the EAP and IFP sectors.

Research design and analysis
The research design which was described, outlined the philosophy that the research adopted and aspects of the pragmatic paradigm which were followed. In particular, the rationale for the use of a mixed methods approach was provided, given that the use of both quantitative and qualitative research tools were deemed suitable to facilitate the investigation of a range of perspectives, relevant to education and EAP.

The findings which were drawn from the project, which the researcher believes are relevant to the IFP context are as follows:
• There appears to be a need for more structured training interventions for practitioners associated with EAP assessment, given variability in training. – The author postulates that the same is likely to be true for many other IFP tutors given the overlap with EAP and similar fluctuations in teachers’ educational background and training, with regard to assessment.
• There is a lack of reference, amongst practising EAP teachers who assess, to research associated with assessment – Given that a large number of practitioners were active on international pathway programmes, this is likely also to have an impact on IFPs. Additionally, the focus on teaching rather than research inherent to IFP roles suggests that there is also limited time for research associated with assessment across other areas of the IFP curriculum.
• There appears to be an interest in additional opportunities for collaboration amongst EAP practitioners both within and across institutions and with content teachers – The IFP is key resource to enable this interaction

Key proponents of Assessment Literacy
Fulcher, 2012
Popham, 2001
Price et al., 2012
Tayler, 2005
Stiggins, 1991

Features of Assessment Literacy and examples of supporting research in Education, Applied Linguistics and EAP
Bachman, 2004
Inbar-Lourie, 2008, 2013
Mesick, 1989
Shohamy, 2001

Guidance resources for the development and enhancement of EAP Assessment Literacy
Blue et al., 2010
Fulcher, 2010
Davidson & Lynch, 2002
Davies, 1999

Training for teacher Assessment Literacy through general and EAP teacher education
Bailey & Brown, 1996
Brown & Bailey, 2008
Coxiam, 2006
Sharpley, 2002
Wallis, 1993

University-led EAP Assessment Literacy through in-house testing
BALEAP, 2002
O’Sullivan, 2011
Sharpley, 2010
Weir, 1993

Supporting Literature
In terms of the literature which supported the investigation, the table below summarises some of the areas of enquiry which were explored.

References

Assessment Literacy is an emerging area of academic research which takes into account the skills required by stakeholders of assessment in developing, using and interpreting assessments and their results. This paper aimed to highlight possible mechanisms for sustaining and enhancing the Assessment Literacy of IFP practitioners through the broader generalisation of findings which have emerged from a recent research project on the topic of EAP Assessment Literacy.
Assessment literacy in international contexts: putting theory into practice

In the keynote address, Birgit den Oeter and Sara Hannam explored the conference theme of assessment literacy by looking specifically at the concept of assessment literacy and its relevance to practitioners on International Foundation Diploma (IFD) programmes. To introduce the topic, they first considered the challenges of meaningful assessment in different contexts and how these challenges arise from the varied characteristics of the IFD which include: the variety of types of provision (in-house or outsourced); the diversity of cultural and linguistic student backgrounds; the high stakes nature of the assessments; the need to balance content, skills and subject specialism; and the effect of culture shock. According to Bourdieu (in Topper, 2005), students entering a new domain can have three typical responses: they can contest, assimilate into or withdraw from the new system.

Next, the speakers introduced the relatively new notion of assessment literacy, grounding it in their work at the Assessment Standards Knowledge-exchange (ASKe) in Oxford Brookes, and asked the question ‘why research on assessment?’ To suggest an answer, examples were provided of the very wide variety of assessment types and questions that students may now encounter at university. Delegates were then asked to remember the type of assessments they did on their undergraduate studies. It became immediately clear that things have radically changed. Both groups now require ‘a particular and new kind of understanding of education competence in the domain of assessment.’ Arguably, the definition of being a competent teacher or student has also changed.

Effective assessment plays a key role in learning and therefore assessment literacy is key to academic success. But what is assessment literacy and how can it be developed in students and teachers? The answer provided by the speakers is that assessment literacy is a socially situated practice. It is something that is negotiated by both student and teacher. To be assessment literate requires extensive engagement and awareness from the student and the educator. An interesting example of how this can be encouraged was given through the ‘Assessment Compact’ from Oxford Brookes University, which has five tenets for effective assessment underlying the need for both this engagement and awareness:

1. Effective assessment is central to learning.
2. To be effective the relational nature of the assessment and feedback process needs to be emphasised, particularly in terms of the need for active dialogue between students and staff.
3. To be effective, assessment must be recognised as a joint responsibility between teacher and student.
4. The ability to assess, the work of both self and others, is an essential skill for all graduates.
5. For the above tenets to be met in full, students and staff need to be ‘assessment literate’ and actively participate in disciplinary communities of assessment practice.

In the keynotes, they introduced the ‘Dear Diary’ data collection tool, a two-year project analysing student audio diary entries. The participants kept these diaries as a reflection on issues around their assignments and their entries provided useful insight into their attitudes. Delegates looked at some diary extracts from international students and were asked to consider what the language might reveal about the students’ perspectives on assessment. UK education, and anything else of note. This discussion was then used to refer back to the three possible responses students may have: contesting, assimilating or withdrawing.

As a conclusion, delegates were presented with some ways in which IFD practitioners can develop their own assessment literacy and at the same time help develop that of their students. Teachers need to have insight into the ways students think about assessment; they should listen carefully to their students (listening for evidence) and also be aware that silent students still have views. IFD teachers must reflect on their own assessment practice, create opportunities for student reflection in class, and allow space for comparison with students’ former assessment experience. We must all recognise how much we are asking of our IFD students.’

Authentic EAP assessment: Does joint marking of Subject assignments work?

About the author

Bella Ruth Reichard
EAP Tutor/Extended Diploma Module Leader

Michael Stephenson
EAP Tutor/Extended Foundation Diploma Module Leader

‘it may seem superficial to students to write an essay just for language assessment...’

One aspect of ‘authenticity’ in EAP assessment is to what extent the assessment reflects the tasks students need to do in their target contexts (Alexander et al., 2008). On pathway programmes, one way to use a task similar to the target context for assessing writing is to mark assignments that students write for their subject modules from an EAP perspective. This paper describes the benefits and challenges of such ‘joint marking’ and makes suggestions for implementation in practice.

The context for this paper is an International Diploma in Business pathway programme (described by Herron, 2013). One subject assignment, ‘Management and Organisation’, is given a separate EAP mark in addition to the mark given for the subject; the same piece of work therefore gives rise to two summative marks for the separate modules.

The following discussion is partly based on comments by students and staff involved in this assignment.

Benefits

Joint assessment can have significant benefits. First, as students are aware that their work will be assessed by their EAP tutors and their subject teachers, they may see this as a chance to produce an assignment which displays a high standard in both subject knowledge and general academic literacy. This, in turn, can foster a non-frAGMENTARY view of language and content within students; one student commented that the joint assessment helped to ‘identify our strengths and weaknesses in communicating our answers’. This comment indicates that the student has understood the importance of the ‘how’ of the answer; it also suggests that joint marking may help students to appreciate the credibility of EAP provision alongside their often more highly regarded subject modules.

In addition, as it may seem superficial to students to write an essay just for language assessment, the use of a real, context-specific, joint-marked assignment as EAP assessment may inject more authenticity and validity into the assessment procedure; much more so than context-free timed writing, at least. Moreover, as this assignment directly reflects what EAP classes in this context prepare students for, awarding it a writing score for the EAP module as well, ensures fairness of assessment for that module (Hedge, 2000).

Finally, joint marking indirectly benefits students by encouraging dialogue between subject and EAP teachers. One product of this close collaboration – and of the fact that EAP teachers actually read a number of subject assignments – is that joint marking can be seen as a form of teacher development, insofar as EAP teachers can gain a better understanding of the subject content and the subject teachers’ expectations. Teachers from different disciplinary backgrounds can develop an eye for the specific conventions of the discipline for which they are preparing their students (Hylland, 2004). This can result in positive feedback over time (Fulcher, 2000), as EAP practitioners are better able to tailor their provision more specifically to the actual assignment as a result of their involvement in marking it.

Challenges and possible solutions

Despite the clear benefits that joint assessment can have, there are also major challenges. In order to avoid penalising students in two modules for one area of performance, subject teachers need to mark only for content and not for language, and EAP teachers need to abstract language from content and only mark for language. However, these areas are often difficult to dissociate; the student within the remit of this article to discuss in depth what EAP is, but this topic touches the boundaries between subject content and EAP. For example, it can be unclear in whose remit it falls to mark for, and comment on, ‘structure’, and what exactly is meant by this term in the different modules. Paragraph structure is probably EAP, but ‘line of argument’ can also be called ‘structure’, and whereas this is arguably a part of the subject module, it is taught in EAP classes. In some exceptional cases, a student may receive conflicting feedback comments from the two teachers if the term ‘structure’ is used differently, for example ‘Structure very good’ (subject tutor) and ‘Difficult to read due to poor structure’ (EAP tutor).

In order to provide optimal guidance and clarity for the teachers involved, as neat a division as possible is required for the two sets of marking criteria; perhaps implementing explicit restrictions pertaining to what should NOT be marked by the respective subject and EAP tutors. Another possibility would be to use a joint feedback sheet, so that both teachers see each other’s comments and can adjust anything that might seem contradictory to students. Alternatively, both teachers could annotate the same copy of the assignment, so that the EAP tutor can see what the subject teacher comments on.

Some students are concerned that if a subject assignment is used to assess EAP skills, subject knowledge might affect the EAP mark. One student on this programme feared that the EAP mark was influenced by the subject task and that if the assignment had been easier from a subject perspective, the student may have had a better chance to create a coherent, well-written essay resulting in a higher EAP mark. This concern also raises questions about the authenticity of this assignment as a fair EAP assessment – especially if EAP is the part of the assignment that is transferable to other assignments and even other subjects. Even though EAP teachers mark only for those transferable skills in this assignment, the concern stands that if students genuinely struggle with the subject, coherence in their answer may be compromised.

Perils and pitfalls of online marking

About the author

Carla Morris
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Garry Maguire from Oxford Brookes University outlined the more commonly vocalised advantages and disadvantages of using Grade Mark which he presented at a BALEAP PIM in November 2012 as follows:

Pros:
- easy to access
- can check originality
- saves paper

Cons:
- clumsy and difficult/fiddly to use
- Internet connections – slow; loss of connection or errors
- Glitches & bugs

As the phenomenon of online marking increases, so too does the debate concerning its usability and its performance as a mechanism for feedback. The discussion among markers appears somewhat polarised; opinions ranging from enthusiasm to dread, often settling on ambivalence at best. In our Inform presentation we wanted to look at the pros and cons of using Grade Mark. However, the main point of contention tends to be the mechanics of online feedback, which perhaps obscures more profound concerns, for instance, the integrity of the marking and the possible physical effects that reading on a screen may have.

Therefore, rather than resorting to the traditional polarisation that such discussions tend to be characterised by, we attempted to look at the positive aspects of using Grade Mark versus the broader issues and concerns alluded to above. This is a short pilot study which brings together some views of online marking and in particular, Grade Mark.

However, Maguire’s presentation was generally positive and supportive of the online facility, suggesting that students favoured the type of feedback they received on Grade Mark. This perspective was supported by our findings when we looked at a range of module evaluations on the International Foundation Programme at the University of Kent. In module evaluations on over 15 modules we found that feedback from students tended to be positive in relation to online grading. When asked whether ‘Having online feedback on my Moodle-based assignments was preferable to written or printed feedback’ students generally selected ‘Definitely Agree’ (average of 4.2 out of 5). ‘Definitely Agree’ being 5 out of 5. Significantly however, evaluations were higher in instances where aca-
features provided ample online feedback in comparison with those where academics were less forthcoming. Since 2006 on the University of Kent IFP, the use of Turnitin has become prevalent on all modules. However, it wasn’t until 2012 that paperless submissions only and the use of Grade Mark came in. Since then, colleagues and students have variously complained that students do not look at the feedback, leading to the question of whether it is worth commenting extensively on a student’s work. Yet this seems to contradict directly Maguire’s findings and those related to the module evaluations indicated above.

### Engaging students in online feedback

Nonetheless, colleagues within EAP consistently complain about the lack of acknowledgement from students regarding online feedback. Consequently, in 2013, Courtney & Coleman (two EAP tutors from the University of Kent) followed up on Maguire’s presentation and examined how to encourage student engagement in online feedback and to try to build on the seemingly positive elements perceived by Maguire. Among the strategies they proposed were to include reflective exercises on feedback within the assessment itself. Another was to hold one-to-one oral feedback reflecting exercises on feedback within the assessment. These exercises were designed to make students think critically about the feedback they received. This could lead to a deeper level of understanding and engagement, as students would be more actively involved in the feedback process.

Presumably, through heuristic development, the technology will improve, but there are other concerns that should, perhaps, be highlighted concerning the use of Grade Mark and possibly other software marking packages. The automaticity can lead to generic feedback, thus potentially devaluing the quality and relevance of the comments made. A degree of effort is also required on the part of the student to access the marker’s suggestions by hovering over the Quickmark dialogue icon. Among less assiduous students, this is only more likely to discourage them from reading feedback. In addition, annotations are easily editable, allowing the accidental deletion of comments.

### Online marking challenge

However, a more concerning issue is the effect that the physical process of reading text vertically on a screen might have on the marker. We are used to reading pages from left to right and it is not by accident that E-readers mimic the flicking pages of a book rather than the scroll of a computer screen. Growing research suggests that reading on a computer is more tiring and affects concentration and cognitive processes (Noyes & Garland 2008). Research further implies that not only is reading vertically more physically and mentally taxing (Wastlund 2007), comprehension can also be compromised (Jabr 2013; Mangan, Walgermo, Bronnick 2008). This has concerning implications in relation to the accuracy and integrity of the marking process.

There are clear advantages to using Grade Mark: it is quick and easy to use, provided one internet service is up to speed; it is convenient, and it avails the marker of a wide range of feedback tools. It also facilitates the standardisation of marking across modules. Nevertheless, a quick poll among colleagues indicates that many do not like using it. It could simply be down to mechanical difficulties which will likely be addressed through software upgrades. Yet for some, at least, reading on a screen in comparison with text on paper will always be less appealing, and there is evidence to suggest that the former can lead to comprehension errors. It could also be argued that students are not receiving the quality of feedback they deserve due to a paucity of comments and the over-use of ‘generic’ Quick marks. This could be because of technical difficulties or may be as a result of ‘screen fatigue’ affecting the marker. However, one aspect is certainly true: there is no going back. Therefore, an improvement in the quality of the software and the development of coping strategies among markers is essential in order to ease the passage of this innovation.

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Investigation of reading-to-write essays as an alternative to the discursive essay for pre-Masters students

Colleagues and I felt that the discursive essay which forms part of the summative assessment on our Graduate Diploma programme created negative washback, while the coursework (including a literature review) served our students’ long-term needs more effectively. An investigation was conducted into students’ perceptions of and performance on the existing exam format and an alternative: a reading-to-write exam. The alternative format was rated more favourably on five criteria: ease of exam, ease of preparation, interest of preparation, suitability as a post-graduate selection tool and usefulness and most students’ performance was judged to be the same or better on this task type.

Washback is defined by Alderson and Wall (1993) as “the notion that testing influences teaching;” it can be positive or negative and planned or unintentional (Spratt, 2005).

The coursework on the Graduate Diploma at INTO Manchester includes an annotated bibliography, literature review, research proposal and 5,000-word dissertation, on a topic of students’ own choice. Colleagues and I agree that these assessments generate positive washback: they motivate both teachers and students to focus on skills (and sometimes subject knowledge) needed for their future Masters courses. However, we have long felt that the summative writing exam is a discursive essay, on a general topic, without reference to other sources. This does the opposite. The lack of authenticity arising from its mismatch with what is needed at university can lead to misconceptions about the academic writing process.

There is a wealth of literature supporting the use of ‘reading-to-write’ tasks – essays which require integration of material from reading texts – as an alternative to the discursive essay. Many recent papers explicitly make the link between the authentic qualities of these assessments and the creation of positive washback (Cumming, 2013; Gebriel and Plakans, 2013; Weigle, Yang and Montree, 2013). Gebriel and Plakans (2013, p99) sum up the rationale for choosing reading-to-write essays thus: it;

... hinges on their perceived authenticity (Fark and Dobson, 1996; Weigle, 2002, 2004) as well as the content they provide to writers, which may mitigate the demands writing-only tasks place on creativity and idea generation (Plakans, 2008; Read, 1990). However, little attention has been paid to other stakeholders’ perceptions of this type of test. For this reason, my research focussed on student perceptions of and performance on both essay types: discursive and reading-to-write.

Two Graduate Diploma classes participated in the study, with ages ranging from 21-44 and a fairly even gender distribution. Entry scores ranged from IELTS 5.5 to 7.5 and their nationalities were Chinese, Georgian, Indian, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Saudi, Taiwanese, Thai and Vietnamese. As normally happens at the end of term 1, the mock exams included a discursive essay. In addition to this, students were invited to complete a reading-to-write task during the same week.

The reading-to-write task was designed in order to simulate real-life post-graduate academic writing. Students were given high-lighted sections within two unabridged texts upon which to base their writing. Texts were distributed the day before the test in the interests of authenticity, but also to aid optimal performance for poor readers (Cumming, 2013). This task was set the following day:

Outline some of the arguments for and against PRP (performance-related pay) in education and explain which stance you find most convincing and why. Refer to the specified sections of the two texts you have read and make sure you follow standard academic citation procedures, including in-text referencing.

Like the task used by Gebriel and Plakans (2013), the intention was to elicit features including quotation, paraphrase, synthesis and citation, with the addition of an evaluative element. This, as this is something students must do for their literature review assessment and in their writing at university. This topic was chosen because it relates to the management module all students complete as part of the course.

Wolfsberger (2013) conceptualizes reading-to-write as a separate construct from reading and writing, necessitating specifically designed reading-to-write criteria. However, ease of comparison of the two essay types, and due to the lack of available reading-to-write criteria, both essay types in this study were marked using the same discursive essay marking criteria; this is acknowledged as a limitation. Markers dealt with source integration under coherence and citation / plagiarism under task fulfilment.

Once both tasks had been completed, students’ performance on each was investigated via a comparison of the essay scripts. Students’ perceptions of the two essay scripts were investigated under five categories (ease of exam; interest of preparation; ease of preparation; suitability as a post-graduate selection tool; usefulness) via questionnaires, focus groups and a teacher interview.

Despite students’ familiarity with the task (the majority had extensive experience of IELTS, which includes a discursive essay) and the apparently increased cognitive load of dealing with two texts in the reading-to-write task, most students performed the same or better on the reading-to-write essay, with Grade discount students experiencing the largest and most frequent gains. The exception to this were those at the higher and lower ends (grades A and D for the discursive essay) who performed worse on the reading-to-write essay. It may be possible to hypothesise that, rather than being a burden, the texts actually constituted a support for many students at the mid-range of ability.

In terms of students’ perceptions, overall, they responded more positively to the reading-to-write exam than the discursive essay on all five research categories, with quantitative and qualitative data supporting this result. The most positive response emerged for the suitability of the reading-to-write test as an accurate measure of readiness to write at post-graduate level. 97% (60/62) questionaire responses judged it to be an accurate or very accurate measure, compared to only 48% (26/62) for the discursive essay. This, linked with a similarly positive response garnered for the perceived usefulness of reading-to-write, might indicate an awareness among students of the possibility of matching their long-term aims (writing at post-graduate level) with their short-term aim (gaining entry to university) via an ‘authentic’ exam task. In addition, content supplied by reading-to-write (identified by 4/6 focus group participants as a factor facilitating optimal performance) might enhance test reliability, which may, in turn, enhance its suitability as a university selection test.

In conclusion, further research is needed, particularly into the specifics of task design and marking criteria, before reading-to-write tasks are likely to be implemented for large-scale testing. However, the results of this study suggest that our students might have greater intrinsic motivation, a greater awareness of what they really need for university and a greater willingness to engage in complex tasks than we sometimes give them credit for, if one the EAP testing culture could create conditions to allow (rather than inhibit) this.


The lack of authenticity arising from its mismatch with what is needed at university can lead to misconceptions about the academic writing process.
Lectures. Learn Listening and Note-taking Skills.

Ash, F. Tomlinson, J.
Harper Collins Publishers

This book from the Collins Academic Skills Series is for anyone preparing to attend University lectures delivered in English such as students on Pre-sessional and IFP courses. Developed as a self study resource rather than a core coursebook, it aims to familiarize learners with some lecture genre conventions and to provide initial exposure to this spoken genre. The book focuses more on developing transferable listening skills than on language work.

The book consists of 10 chapters. Every two chapters are followed by an authentic lecture extract complete with a worksheet. Then there are appendices, a glossary, audio scripts, a list of useful online learner resources and an answer key. There is a course CD at the back of the book.

Each chapter starts with aims and a self-evaluation quiz, followed by 8-10 short activities focusing predominantly on developing macro-skills and top-down processing of lecture, although some practice is provided as well. The listening content is scripted and delivered in an intentionally clear and slow manner, which might not be challenging enough for higher level students. The chapters are concluded with a checklist of key points to be remembered, which could be more stimulating if presented gapped statements for learners to be completed.

Although the chapters could be used as stand-alone units over 3-4 weeks, it might be preferable to go through them in a sequential manner as they follow the lecture cycle stages:

- **Chapters 1 and 2** focus on the pre-listening stage and introduce lectures within a bigger context of academic studies, linking them to course reading and assessments. The chapters also offer a lot of practical advice on how to prepare for lectures, for example, on the amount of background reading required, helping to set realistic learner expectations about lectures.
- **Chapters 3-7** deal with the actual listening stage by providing training in macro-skills of understanding the overall lecture structure, identifying its main points. The chapters are progressively challenging, from requiring learners to take notes of factual information to asking them to identify and critically evaluate a lecturer’s stance. There is a good balance between activities highlighting common genre discourse patterns and those raising learners’ awareness of differences in individual lecturer’s styles, accents and their stance.
- **The two final chapters** focus the post-listening stage and highlight the importance of revising and re-organising lecture notes (be they electronic or paper ones), using them to prepare for assessments. The chapters also provide useful tips on how to transfer lecture listening skills to other listening activities at university such as listening in tutorials and seminars.

Lectures in the book vary from Business to Meteorology, while the lecture extracts length ranges from 3 - 6 minutes, which does not reflect the complexity of what students will likely encounter in lectures at university but provides useful initial exposure to the genre. The accompanying listening activities are carefully scaffolded and are quite authentic. For instance, note-taking tasks include completing linear notes, creating a mind-map, annotating lecture slides. There are 5 lectures in total so the content would not be sufficient to build a complete course around it but could be used as a supplementary material.

The Authentic Lectures encourage learners to apply the listening skills developed in the preceding chapters. Unlike practice activities in the chapters, these lectures are unscripted and ungraded. The CD features talks by American, British and Canadian speakers, but exposure to a greater variety of accents would be welcomed. Subjects vary from Business to Meteorology, while the lecture extracts length ranges from 3 - 6 minutes, which does not reflect the complexity of what students will likely encounter in lectures at university but provides useful initial exposure to the genre. The accompanying listening activities are carefully scaffolded and are quite authentic. For instance, note-taking tasks include completing linear notes, creating a mind-map, annotating lecture slides. There are 5 lectures in total so the content would not be sufficient to build a complete course around it but could be used as a supplementary material.

What sets this book apart from other books I have used is its emphasis on raising learners’ awareness of academic expectations and guidelines. I would definitely recommend this book as an introductory resource to those EAP students who have had limited exposure to the lecture genre in the English Speaking environment. At the same time, teachers are likely to ‘dip’ into chapters according to the listening subskill that is being covered. I have been using the book as a supplementary classroom resource and have found the chapters focusing on preparing for lectures and following up on them particularly useful, because these areas were not covered in the main listening course book I was using.

As a Personal Tutor I have also found chapter 10 useful for giving my tutees advice on how to make and follow a personal improvement plan and what online resources they could use to develop their listening skills further. I would also recommend using the self-evaluation quizzes as 5-minute warm-up activities to help learners see how they personally can benefit from the session they are attending, which is particularly useful for motivating mixed-level classes that EAP tutors often teach.

In addition, I have been using various questions in chapter headings as a springboard for a classroom discussion on listening strategies. This generally helped me to see how much practice was needed for a particular subskill.

Svetlana Mazhurnaya
IFP Tutor
Reading University

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