

# *Preparing for university writing: Integrating reading, critical thinking, research, language*

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I describe an EAP writing program at Simon Fraser University, Canada, in which advanced skills are integrated around authentic texts: critical thinking, active/critical reading, sentence structure, vocabulary, and style (Marshall, 2017). I suggest that students best retain knowledge through multi-stage review and consolidation, allowing for extensive interaction with input and later application of knowledge in new contexts (output) (Gass, 1997).

On EAP bridging programs, pre-session courses, and first-year academic writing courses, students are usually taught generic skills that allow them to understand and convey complex information (Crusan, 2010) through writing. Students then face the challenge of applying these key generic skills concurrently, or months later, on different courses across the disciplines. I address two issues that relate to this challenge: [i] how teachers can integrate a broad range of skills in the discrete writing class, and [ii] how teachers can help their students to retain and apply knowledge through multi-stage consolidation and review of key skills. I begin by highlighting the importance of basing the integration of the following key skills around the detailed analysis of authentic academic texts: active and critical reading, critical thinking, research skills, academic vocabulary, academic style, effective sentence structure, and writing-related grammar (Marshall, 2017). I then address the question of when, where, and how students apply the knowledge they learn in our academic writing classes. I discuss how teachers can help students to retain knowledge taught (input) through review and consolidation (interaction) so as to increase their chances to apply the knowledge and skills effectively in different contexts across the disciplines (output) (Gass, 1997). I illustrate how I have taken on these two challenges in my practice through materials development and teaching on a foundational academic literacy at Simon Fraser University, Canada, taken by 850+ students per year.

Steve researches the academic literacy practices of multilingual students in higher education. Steve is the author of *Advance in Academic Writing* and *Grammar for Academic Purposes*, published by Pearson English, as well as numerous other academic publications.

## Key takeaways

- Try teaching academic writing through integrating reading, critical thinking, vocabulary, style, grammar and sentence structure – these are all skills that students employ when they write assignments.
- When teaching these skills, they should be illustrated with authentic academic texts.
- Students need to turn *input* in *output* – to do this they need to *interact* with knowledge to internalize it (Gass, 1997).
- It's not enough to teach something and move on. Teachers need to build in consolidation activities to help students internalize the knowledge, which can increase their chances of effectively applying the knowledge in different contexts.

## Further Reading

- Gass, S. M. (1997). *Input, Interaction, and the Second Language Learner*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Marshall, S. (2018). *Grammar for Academic Purposes*. Pearson ELT, Canada.
- Marshall, S. (2017). *Advance in Academic Writing: Integrating Research, Critical Thinking, Academic Reading and Writing*. Pearson ELT, Canada.

## Key links

- <https://pearsonerpi.com/en/elt/eap/advance-in-academic-writing>
- <https://pearsonerpi.com/en/elt/eap/grammar-for-academic-purposes-book-my-elab-etext-12-month-access-139517>
- <https://www.english.com/blog/>
- <https://www.pearsonelt.com/professional-development/events/iatefl.html>
- <http://www.sfu.ca/education/faculty-profiles/smarshall.html>

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