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Responding to a growing interest in evidence-based research within EAP, *Researching Contexts, Practices and Pedagogies in English for Academic Purposes* is as timely as it is wide-ranging, well-thought and suggestive. It becomes a much-welcome contribution to the literature, as it offers an impressively detailed snapshot of current trends and approaches within educational research as these have been directly applied to EAP. The book is not aimed at active educational researchers, but to "practitioners and decision-makers in the area of supporting international students in English-medium higher education" (p. 2). It reads, as a consequence, as much more than an aggrandized compilation of recent research; strongly driven by context, it offers valuable background knowledge and a wealth of research practices that readers are encouraged to apply to their own contexts.

The organisation of the book is innovative in two major ways. First, the material is arranged according to the position of the intended user and the purpose research is carried out or commissioned, so that the recommendations for further reading and extended bibliography are relevant to that context primarily. Secondly, each chapter is accompanied by a vignette which narrates the steps taken by one or more fictional characters to make research-informed decisions in a given scenario. Each of the characters aims to represent some of the many faces of EAP: tutor for a

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particular group of students, course director or head of an EAP department. Being an uncommon method in research writing, these short but detailed scenes seem out of place at first, but ultimately succeed to illuminate how previous discussion of research and theory can help within a given context. Each scene discusses relevant options for resolving issues of access to data, its collection and the position of the researcher, and they offer enough detail on how the analysis and contextualisation within existing research can help the research findings to be of use for EAP practitioners in the position of the characters in the vignettes.

The first chapter, by way of introduction, is geared towards newcomers to EAP who would like to overview the state of the art in the field. It highlights key studies that map teaching practice and research in EAP, giving an account of major issues and orienteering towards the many forms educational research can take in the already complex nature of EAP, as well as the general steps to follow to carry out research and disseminate its findings. However, the seminal definition of EAP in the chapter as "the study of English for the purpose of participating in higher education" (Bruce, 2011, p. 6) appears problematic at first sight; Blaj-Ward fails to discuss other conceptualizations of EAP as either having the "aim of assisting learners' study or research" in English, as well as a "theoretically grounded and research informed enterprise" (Hyland, 2006, p. 1), nor she responds to more general theories about language, learning and teaching (Basturkmen, 2007). As a result, the view of EAP in the book is narrowed down significantly; for instance, the EAP roles previously identified do not reflect the multiplicity and overlapping of the responsibilities of EAP practitioners as "needs assessor, specialized syllabus designer, authentic materials developer, and content knowledgeable instructor, capable of coping with a revolving door of content areas relevant to learners' communities" (Belcher, 2006, p. 139). The author identifies, however, key positions for actors within EAP which do not contradict this fact, and when she later adjusts for career progression, she acknowledges that many of these roles often collide on top of the role of researcher she promotes in her monograph.

Precisely, one of the many strengths of this monograph is the apt insistence on the usefulness of research for academic practice within EAP. It is cogent with established opinion (Hamp-Lyons, 2011; Hardwood & Petric, 2011) and with the emphasis on social constructivism she evidences in stressing the multiplicity of sources of information (objective, subjective, quantitative and qualitative) when carrying out research. This emphasis is evidenced not only in the vignettes, but also in the discussion of recent research (Cheng, 2011; Lucas & Tang, 2013; Sovic, 2013).

Focusing on educational superstructures outside the classroom, Chapter 2 offers an often-overlooked picture of the wider context of EAP. It situates classroom practice as responding to more global circumstances and global trends within HE teaching

and learning (such as the pervasive introduction of technology or the internationalisation of tertiary institutions), and it discusses key concepts and research into various subject areas such as Arts and Design or Science and Technology. Distinguishing between "insider research" (Trowler, 2012) and overall research, it ascertains how institutional research such as the National Student Survey in the UK can help determine the need for quality feedback from tutors regarding academic writing, which is also found in smaller-scope insider research (Robson, Leat, Wall, & Lofthouse, 2013). The remainder of the chapter is more tentative, as it deals with ongoing trends. Relevant research and theory around the use of technology and the internationalisation of academia are analysed, though carefully explaining that these often overlook that the student learning experience must remain at the centre of educational design, practice and research.

Chapter 3 delves into the EAP classroom to identify a number of parameters to be catered for in the preparation or instruction of a given EAP session. Taking needs analysis as starting point, the chapter summarises approaches towards identifying these through interviews, genre analysis of academic texts or corpus-based research, as well as it details methods to evaluate the effectiveness of EAP materials and EAP-geared technology. Blaj-Ward discusses ongoing debates on the use of materials (Hardwood, 2013) and the critical reflection on academic literacies (Wingate & Tribble, 2012), showing how research can help unearth the relevance of materials and competences for target audiences and, in turn, also inform materials and curricular design in HE. On technology, she makes an argument to look up to theory and research (Kukulska-Hulme, 2012) to decide from the vast range of choices available (Bloch, 2013).

Set within the frame of exchange or overseas study, Chapter 4 is highly instrumental. It singles out a number of research projects focusing on learner engagement with EAP materials and in EAP tasks and it targets several areas such as student particular needs, attitudes towards materials and engagement in activities in the EAP classroom, and the use of feedback by learners. Centring upon the learner, the chapter exhorts the need to develop student critical thinking and reading skills as reflected by research findings (Liu, Chang, Yanga, & Suna, 2011; Holme & Chalauisaeng, 2006). It tackles the issue of student performance in EAP courses and assessment, stressing the importance of researching into student perceptions of the design and quality of EAP provisions as a strong gauge for motivation. The chapter also argues against readily identifying language proficiency with academic achievement in the context of student performance, giving an account of several studies which back up those views and discussing the usefulness of linguistic frameworks of reference. Finally, it uses contextual information on student perception of EMI in countries where English is not the language of administration

(Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra, 2012) to remind that discrepancies between institutional and student expectations of EAP must be addressed.

Of particular importance to the implicit readership of the monograph, Chapter 5 focuses on researching the opinions and performance of tutors within EAP. Being key actors (as they directly mediate between materials, students and tasks), research into their professional knowledge about materials, course design, style of deliver and classroom skills is crucial to guarantee success and promote excellence (Alexander, 2012). Blaj-Ward acknowledges the difficulties to carry out research for tutors on fixed-term or teaching-intensive contracts, but she is convincing in its importance for improving instructional practice. The roles of assessor and feedback provider are particularly detailed; she capitalises on existing research (Walsh, 2013) to show how teacher talk and feedback can be enriched and become more useful to EAP students. Attention is also given to often-overlooked elements in EAP provisions, such as peer observation and staff development, showing higher student satisfaction and academic success in contexts where these are implemented. For the classroom practitioner, the chapter establishes the importance of research for career progression into management and leadership within EAP, as well as professional practice or in-session performance.

Chapter 6 explores the argumentation towards self-improvement behind most of the research on the quality of EAP provisions. It makes emphasis on the British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes (BALEAP) accreditation scheme, regulatory bodies and other governmental agencies to ensure quality among EAP staff and programmes. It distinguishes between external factors (such as external evaluations) and internal drivers for quality enhancement (such as improving student results). It offers structured summaries on a wealth of evidence-based studies on the impact of EAP research in non-EAP teaching and learning contexts, although mostly restricted to the UK and Australia. The chapter ends with some coherent methodological considerations on the importance of engagement of all participants in research-driven quality-assurance processes.

Concluding the monograph, Chapter 7 revisits briefly aspects of validity, reliability of data and research outcomes in the narrow context of international students at UK institutions. It addresses aspects of working with diverse datasets collected from across institutions, and it encourages further work to be carried out in educational research, such as exploring the validity of the book claims outside Anglophone countries, or integrating the manifold of particular needs into a coherent framework for researcher development. Finally, the chapter closes with a discussion of the importance of integrating research into everyday practice, and it offers general approaches to which this could generate impact both at local and more global levels.

The monograph is impressively comprehensive, profusely documented and coherent. It gives great prominence (and it shows evidence of) the impact of research on everyday professional practice, as well as it reflects the dynamism of current status of research in the field with a well-imbricated analysis of over two hundred studies. It entails an ideal first port of call for newcomers to evidence-based research, but it will be also of use to educational investigators who would like to widen the scope of their research and diversify their practice before or after consulting more theoretical manuals (Cousin, 2009; Tight, 2012). The applicability of its claims, however, may not be universal; just as there is "no single academic English relevant to the entire academic community" (Jenkins, 2013, p. 46), there is no single picture to the world of EAP research. As a result, most sections become narrowly centred upon BALEAP-related projects or the UK context which, needless to say, does not account for all of EAP contexts globally. The book acknowledges that pertinent research is carried out elsewhere, but it often misses the chance to incorporate findings from non-Anglophone contexts into the discussions at hand. In the same manner, there are recurring themes in the text which are valid but may not be an option for the tutor or course designer: the need to wrap the curriculum around the student can be impeded by tight governmental or institutional control; similarly, the validity of the scenarios offered in the book may not be feasible or relevant for wider audiences in similar positions in more diverse contexts.

These aforementioned shortcomings are anticipated by the author and duly noted, but some remarkable gaps are found. Despite its emphasis on the dissemination of research findings, the book misses targeting EAP for academic research and publication; its claims towards writing and assessment (a substantial part of EAP for the intended audience) are scattered throughout the chapters; while it extolls the value of quantitative research to complement and work in unison with qualitative approaches, it fails to give sufficient detail (or warning) about the technicalities and complexities of quantitative educational research. Ultimately, the monograph has a (perhaps unavoidable) problem: being inextricably linked to recent and ongoing research, the text risks becoming a snapshot which, given the rapid advancement of research and practice in EAP, may become obsolete quickly. Even with these cautionary remarks in mind, the strengths of the book greatly outweigh its shortcomings. The text does not aim at being exhaustive or normative, and it succeeds in engagingly offering a valid method of applying the outcomes and findings of EAP research into everyday practice. As the reflection of current, and most surely lasting, tensions and challenges for wider EAP research, it will surely be the inception of much evidence-based research.

About the author

Antonio Jimenez-Muñoz (BA Hons, PGCE, MA, PhD) is at present associate professor within the Department of English, German, and French Philology at the Universidad de Oviedo, in Spain. He has also taught Linguistics and English for Specific Purposes at the universities of Kent and Hull, in the United Kingdom. He has published applied-linguistic articles in relevant journals such as the *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, *History and Social Communication*, *Porta Linguarum*, and *Language Value*. He has contributed to recent edited collections on evidence-based linguistic research by Oxford University Press, Routledge, and others. His main field of study is the acquisition of English for Specific Purposes in English-as-a-Medium-of-Instruction contexts, particularly in those degrees related to Business Studies. He promotes evidence-based research in plurilingual learning contexts in order to help validate the theoretical tenets put forward by educators, pedagogical approaches and policymakers. He is also a certified teacher trainer in ICT-enhanced language learning for the Spanish government and the regional government of Asturias, in the north of Spain.

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