




The role of EAP in enhancing Chinese students' academic writing skills: A review of current practices and future directions

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ABSTRACT

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This study explores the role that English for Academic Purposes or EAP plays in enhancing the academic writing skills of Chinese students. Through extensive research based on the compatibility of Chinese students with the English language, this paper looks forward to the challenges students face in academic writing in English in China. Findings have revealed that EAP programs aim to make learners familiar with being perfect in linguistic terms, making them conscious of the several genres, and executing various strategies required for actively engaging in academic communities. A plethora of theoretical alignments have evolved, including theories of process-based writings, strategies based on specifications, and frameworks that depend on rational analysis and reasoning, all of which aid the functioning of EAP. These courses make learners familiar with critical thinking perspectives, proper grammar, enriched vocabulary, authorial stances, and better reasoning in writing. EAP courses have been found by the research to be more effective through feedback from educators and comments from community peers, along with several technological innovations. While AI tools such as ChatGPT and Criterion provide students with the confidence to write fluently, these tools also diminish critical and creative thinking abilities. The researchers prioritize the localization of the EAP curriculum in mostly non-Anglophone contexts. The study thus focuses on the strength of EAP courses in transforming learning environments to be equitable and accessible for all.

Contribution/Originality: The study contributes to the existing literature through the first logical analysis of how EAP is useful in the learning process of Chinese students within the context of academic writing practices. The primary contribution of the paper is the finding that EAP enables Chinese students to learn English as a Foreign Language (EFL) positively.

1. INTRODUCTION

The English language is gradually taking a place in the top-tier internationalization practices, which has led to English being adopted as the lingua franca. English has facilitated communication among a wide range of cultures and language differences worldwide. From the perspective of increasing internationalization of higher education, the core requirement for a student to be successful, especially among non-native English speakers, is academic writing in English (Mhilli, 2023). The Chinese students, who represent one of the largest international student groups globally, consider academic writing in English as both a linguistic and a conceptual challenge. This obstacle is not merely entrenched in proficiency in language, but also in more profound matters such as being unfamiliar with conventions of the Western academy, the lack of training in critical thinking, and the differences in rhetorical

preferences (Li, Ma, Zhao, & Hu, 2020). To bring efficiency in English among Chinese learners, a considerable amount of attention must be paid to proper training and increasing connection with the Western academic curriculum. English for Academic Purposes (EAP) has evolved as a targeted pedagogical response to these challenges. The aim of EAP programmes is to equip learners with linguistic accuracy, awareness of the genre, and discursive strategies necessary for participating in academic communities (Ding & Bruce, 2017). The provision of linguistic accuracy helps clarify communication and bridge the global gap that non-English students might face. Thus, the EAP programs focus on preventing misinterpretation of commands and incorrect grammar, thereby increasing global communication.

EAP is being vigorously integrated into tertiary education, often as part of enhancement tracks of English language or international programme curricula in China. However, the design and implementation of EAP courses vary greatly, and their specific efficiency in addressing the precise needs of Chinese learners remains questionable (Li et al., 2020). The gradually growing emphasis on EAP is also closely connected to much wider national education reforms. Since the College English Teaching Guidelines (CETG) and the promotion of the “Double First-Class” initiatives were issued, there has been an encouragement to embed academic English more profoundly into the structured curricula (Li, 2024). Along with the expectations of the institutions, the increasing requirement for postgraduate students to publish in English-language journals has further elevated the status of EAP. As a result, EAP has spontaneously shifted from a peripheral language support function to a core component of academic success strategies in Chinese universities.

Although it has been highlighted by various studies that, despite taking EAP courses, many Chinese students continue to struggle with the appropriate integration of sources, constructing arguments, and developing the identity of a writer that aligns with disciplinary expectations. For instance, Zhang and Wang (2024) found that Chinese EFL learners often depend on direct intertextuality in their academic writing, gradually shifting to more nuanced authorial identities as they gain experience. This might result in the integration of other literature texts into academic writing through direct quotations and paraphrasing of the text. Similarly, Cumming et al. (2018) observed that students of Chinese universities exhibit diverse levels of proficiency in integrating sources into their English writing, which indicates ongoing challenges that align with the traditions and conventions of the academy. Such proficiency is quite helpful for strengthening vocabulary, improving grammatical knowledge, and enhancing critical thinking capabilities to a significant extent. Moreover, much of the current EAP literature is based on Anglophone contexts, with limited attention to how EAP can be localized and adapted in culturally and linguistically diverse settings like China (Zhao & Yu, 2017). Therefore, this review paper investigates how EAP supports the development of Chinese students’ academic writing skills. It synthesizes findings from recent empirical and theoretical research, focusing on three key questions: (1) What are the current challenges faced by Chinese students in academic writing? (2) How have EAP programs addressed these challenges in practice, both pedagogically and technologically? (3) What directions should future research take to improve the efficacy and contextual relevance of EAP instruction in China? By systematically reviewing and analyzing the literature, this paper aims to identify the extent to which EAP has addressed writing-related difficulties among Chinese students, while also highlighting critical gaps in course design, feedback practices, and instructional technologies. Ultimately, the paper seeks to contribute to the refinement of EAP practice in the Chinese context and to provide pedagogical insights that inform more culturally responsive and learner-centered writing support.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND CORE CONCEPTS

In contemporary English for Academic Purposes (EAP) pedagogy, academic writing is increasingly recognized as a multidimensional activity that integrates linguistic competence, cognitive processes, and sociocultural awareness. This perspective aligns with the view that academic literacy development encompasses both linguistic and sociocultural practices (Lea & Street, 1998; Lillis & Scott, 2015). This practice is helpful for developing a more

effective and holistic learning environment for students, and they become fully equipped to master academic settings. Rather than being merely a skill of language expression, academic writing is seen as a situated practice through which students construct arguments, engage with scholarly voices, and negotiate academic identities (Hyland, 2021). Such engagement enhances communication skills, critical thinking abilities, and makes them confident enough to have an authoritative voice. Accordingly, EAP instruction is informed by multiple theoretical orientations, including process-based writing theories, strategy-focused instruction, and critical thinking frameworks, to address the complex challenges faced by learners, particularly in diverse cultural contexts (Moore, 2011; Wingate, 2012). Thus, learners become much more valued and can have uniqueness within the global community.

Process-oriented writing theory conceptualizes writing as a recursive, nonlinear activity involving multiple stages of planning, drafting, revising, and editing. It encourages pedagogical practices that emphasize continuous feedback, revision, and reflection. As Lu, Zhu, Zhu, and Yao (2024) argue, such an approach enhances learner engagement and supports a deeper understanding of genre conventions and academic discourse. Nevertheless, its implementation in Chinese EAP classrooms is not without difficulty. Many students are accustomed to exam-oriented models where writing is viewed as a one-time performance, and thus may resist iterative drafting processes (He, Wang, Xia, & He, 2024). While process writing has demonstrable pedagogical value, it requires adaptation to local educational habits and learner beliefs to be effectively operationalized.

Complementary to this is strategy-based writing instruction, which promotes learners' metacognitive awareness and their capacity to regulate writing behaviors. Through explicit training in organizing arguments, integrating sources, and considering disciplinary audience expectations, students develop procedural control over writing. It has been observed in empirical studies that strategic training helps to improve performance in writing tasks that are based on some source and are argumentative (Chen, 2022). However, other research suggests that such strategies often remain confined within the context and may not transfer efficiently across academic disciplines Lobato (2012). This indicates that strategy instruction in EAP must be more securely associated with subject-specific writing demands, rather than being transmitted as a comprehensive skill.

Critical thinking is considered an essential element of academic writing in English beyond structural and cognitive control. It involves the interrogation of assumptions, analysis of competing viewpoints, and the generation of reasoned claims. However, promoting critical thinking in EAP classrooms remains a pedagogical challenge. Gimenez et al. (2025) found that although students understand the importance of critical thinking, they often struggle with the correct method for applying it, especially when engaging with authoritative texts. This can create a significant obstacle for learners, where their uniqueness needs to be showcased, and can lead to a fear of negative comments. The Confucian tradition of deference to authority, in Chinese educational contexts, may further hinder students' willingness to adopt a questioning stance (Gurney, 2016). Such unwillingness to question and being unaware of how to think critically about certain evidence in academic writing may thus pose a challenge. This requires a proper remedy for learners to become aware of the critical thought process and perspectives. This calls for approaches that are culturally responsive to critical thinking, advocating dialogic rather than adversarial models of argumentation, and acknowledging the validity of rhetorical alternatives that are more compatible with East Asian thought processes (Wen, Chen, & Yan, 2025).

Visualising collectively, process writing theory offers a developmental perspective, strategy theory makes learners acquainted with procedural tools, and critical thinking introduces a wider epistemological dimension to academic writing. These frameworks function harmoniously in EAP pedagogy, but contextual sensitivity is required for their effective implementation in Chinese classrooms. Rather than importing theoretical models wholesale, successful EAP instruction must involve a pedagogical reinterpreting process grounded in students' academic histories, linguistic ranges, and culturally mediated ways of knowing.

3. CHALLENGES FACED BY CHINESE STUDENTS IN ACADEMIC WRITING

There seems to be significant progress in curriculum design and teaching practices, such as instruction based on genre, process writing cycles, strategy training, and technological integration. Still, many Chinese learners continue to face challenges in adapting to Western academic conventions, constructing logical arguments, and engaging critically with texts. These challenges, recorded across several studies, identify persistent gaps in students' academic literacy, rhetorical awareness, and critical thinking skills, specifically among undergraduate EFL students (Hyland, 2019; Leki, 2007; Li & Flowerdew, 2020).

Recent studies have also crucially focused on the psychological dimensions of academic writing, particularly writing anxiety and self-efficacy. Cheng (2002) identifies writing anxiety as the primary obstacle among Chinese learners to skillful performance in English academic writing. This anxiety often has its roots in the fear of negative evaluation or unfamiliarity with academic conventions and can constrain students from spontaneously engaging with the writing process. Adarkwah and Zeyuan (2020) further elucidate that students with low writing self-efficacy are more likely to adopt writing strategies at a surface level, avoid taking risks, and strive to revise and critically engage with their ideas. Such learners thus also show very low levels of confidence, a constant fear of being criticized, receiving negative comments, and a fear of failing. For instance, Bax, Nakatsuhara, and Waller (2019) assert that Chinese learners with higher academic self-efficacy are more likely to adopt firm positions and demonstrate critical commitment in writing tasks. However, cultural tensions related to analysis continue to synthesize these challenges. As deference to authority is deeply embedded in their educational values, in many Chinese classrooms, students are discouraged from openly challenging established views. As noted by Liu (2018) this deep-rooted cultural orientation can make Chinese learners reluctant to adopt strong contrary ideas, which is definitely a key expectation in the academic discourses of the West.

These challenges are also compounded by the cultural tensions surrounding critique. The theory of accepting and admitting authority is culturally acceptable and widely recognized. This leads to many disputed viewpoints in the Chinese education system. Wen et al. (2025) argue that this leads to an unwillingness to adapt to academic stances, which are highly valued in Western writing resolutions. This may further lead to miscommunication between cultural perspectives. Mu (2025) adds that this cultural disconnection can cause learners to perceive critical analysis as aggressive or unsuitable, which can further lead to the writing being vague or overly cautious. As Hyland (2022) suggests, both instructions of language and an environment that supports intellectual agency are required by the practice of an academic voice with critical analysis.

The practice of critical academic thinking skills remains one of the most persistent challenges for Chinese EAP learners from a cognitive perspective. Learners often feel the requirement to integrate, evaluate, and synthesize various viewpoints into persuasive debate in academic writing. However, students may lack exposure to such reasoning processes, as they are more familiar with reproducing content or responding to structured exams. Wingate (2012) and Moore (2011) have argued that the transformation from reproducing knowledge to constructing knowledge demands explicitly described instruction in epistemic engagement. The fact that many EFL students struggle to express cognitive complexity in a second language can result in excessively descriptive or structurally formulaic standard writing (Li et al., 2020).

Another dimension that influences the academic writing of Chinese students, besides cognitive complexity, is their authorial identity development. Many learners often adopt overly neutral or impersonal tones and struggle to establish a clear academic stance or authorial voice. This is partially because of prior schooling experiences that prioritize objectivity and discourage subjective evaluation. Matsuda and Tardy (2007) argue that voice is not a mere stylistic feature, but is a reflection of the writer's cognitive agency within the academic discourse. The writings of the learners may lack clear statements, proper engagement, and the power to persuade if they are not taught the ways of locating themselves in rhetorical terms or negotiating with the authorial presence. Instructional approaches

in the future must therefore clearly address how students can build confident, authentic identities as academic writers.

Structural and organizational conventions also pose difficulties. Academic writing in English typically complies with a linear structure, which is thesis-driven, where justification is stated explicitly and also logically sequenced. In contrast, Chinese rhetorical traditions often approve a more inductive and circular organization, with an emphasis on contextual build-up and implicitness. This contrast, originally described by Kaplan (1966) and further developed by Connor (2011), has been confirmed in recent empirical studies examining Chinese EAP students' rhetorical strategies (Du, 2019). This rhetorical difference can lead to organizational issues such as vague introductions, hasty transitions, and weak argumentative coherence, all of which deeply affect the clarity and persuasiveness of students' writing.

To sum up, it can be said that the challenges that Chinese students face in academic writing are multifaceted, shaped by linguistic limitations, cultural paradigms, and cognitive unfamiliarity with critical textual production. Addressing these challenges requires more than superficial grammar correction or writing templates; it calls for a holistic reconsideration of how EAP instruction can scaffold students' transition into global academic discourse communities.

4. CURRENT PRACTICES OF EAP IN ENHANCING ACADEMIC WRITING SKILLS

EAP programs have adopted a wide range of pedagogical practices that aim at fostering both linguistic competence and rhetorical awareness. This is a result of the multi-dimensional and complicated challenges that Chinese students face in academic writing. The structure and delivery of EAP courses vary across institutions. Thus, for improving students' proficiency in academic writing, several fundamental approaches have emerged as dominant strategies that are being implemented in these institutions.

The use of 'genre-based pedagogies' is an essential feature of current EAP instruction. This strategy exposes learners to disciplinary writing conventions by analyzing and modeling authentic academic texts. This approach also aims to help students understand how structures of arguments, authorial stance, and citation practices vary across disciplines (Hyland & Shaw, 2016). Learners need to follow these particular strategies to formulate better academic written material. Authorial stances require proper citation and acknowledgment, and using them in academic writing makes the writing more acceptable in the global community. Recent research studies have shown that when instruction based on several genres is merged with guided practice, it can remarkably improve students' ability to produce academic writing that follows proper and specific discipline (Lo & Jeong, 2018). In Chinese EAP contexts, genre pedagogy is significantly used to clarify the norms of academic writing and scaffold the transition of students from generalized English to specific discourse communities (Li et al., 2020). The process-oriented writing cycle, where students engage in repetitive drafting, peer review, and revision, is yet another widely implemented model. This model has been integrated to encourage students' confidence and engagement by enhancing improvement and reflection over the course of time (Kostopoulou & O'Dwyer, 2021). When learners feel encouraged, they develop a sense of writing capability that is much more fluent and well-organized. Moreover, research suggests that a process-oriented writing style generates a greater understanding of academic conventions and provides scope for the development of a critical voice (Çelik, 2020). EAP instructors often practice integrating in-class writing workshops, collaborative editing tasks, and tutor-student conferences to support this approach.

Feedback practices also play a vital role in the development of academic writing. Effective EAP courses employ both formative and summative feedback mechanisms, which include peer commentary, teacher feedback, and automated feedback tools. According to Saeli, Rahmati, and Koltovskaia (2023) students benefit the most when feedback is provided on time, is specific, and is dialogic, offering space for both negotiation and revision rather than correction alone. In Chinese EAP classrooms, however, feedback may not be properly utilized or even misunderstood due to hierarchical classroom cultures or a focus on correctness rather than idea development

(Zhang & Hyland, 2018). This requires pedagogical shifts that encourage interactive and reflective feedback literacy among learners. In addition to instructional practices, initiatives adopted by institutions such as writing centres and peer mentoring programs have gained traction to support students' writing development. Individual consultations that provide personalized support for students struggling with academic discourse norms are offered by writing centres. As Wingate (2012) argues, such supplementary services can play a crucial role in helping students engage more independently with feedback and revision. Le, Sok, and Heng (2024) also highlight the value of peer mentoring systems in Chinese universities, which help clarify and explain writing tasks and foster a community of practice around academic literacy. Another emerging priority is the reform of assessment practices within EAP courses. Grammatical accuracy and textual completeness are often prioritized by traditional assessments. Although they may fail to capture students' growth in argumentation, critical thinking, and genre awareness, portfolio-based assessments have been shown to effectively document students' writing development over time, emphasizing the process-oriented nature of writing and fostering metacognitive awareness (Cresswell, 2000). Additionally, self-regulatory assessment and feedback approaches promote students' cognitive and metacognitive skill development, encouraging self-assessment and reflective practices that support a more inclusive and developmental assessment framework (Evans & Waring, 2024).

The role of the EAP instructor is also central to the effectiveness of these practices. Successful EAP teaching requires instructors to act not only as language experts but also as disciplinary mediators and feedback facilitators. However, teacher preparation and institutional support for EAP vary considerably in China. Evans and Morrison (2011) observe that many instructors lack systematic training in genre pedagogy, formative assessment, or digital tool integration, which constrains their ability to deliver pedagogically consistent and student-centered instruction. Addressing this issue requires a stronger commitment to long-term professional development and collaborative curriculum design within institutions. Taken together, current EAP practices in China demonstrate increasing pedagogical sophistication and responsiveness to student needs. However, issues of contextual relevance, teacher expertise, and alignment with disciplinary goals remain. The continuous innovation in curriculum design, assessment, and teacher education is essential to fully realize the potential of EAP in the process of enhancing academic writing competence in the Chinese higher education context.

5. TECHNOLOGICAL APPLICATIONS AND INNOVATIONS IN EAP TEACHING

The integration of technology into EAP instruction has become an increasingly prominent trend, which offers both opportunities and challenges for the enhancement of academic writing skills. As EAP programs adapt to learning environments in a digital domain and respond to the needs of students for personalized support, a variety of technological tools have emerged to facilitate writing instruction, feedback, and engagement.

One of the most widely adopted tools in recent years is automated writing evaluation (AWE) systems, which include Grammarly, Write & Improve, and Criterion. These systems provide accurate, immediate, and individualized feedback on vocabulary, grammar, coherence, and sometimes content organization. Studies have asserted that AWE can support learners in improving surface-level accuracy and building awareness regarding their writing patterns (Tang & Rich, 2017). However, researchers caution that over-reliance on automated feedback tools may lead to imitative writing, thereby discouraging and disrupting further engagement with rhetorical structure and critical thinking (Ding & Zou, 2024). Therefore, effective AWE integration requires careful pedagogical framing, which includes positioning the tools as supplements rather than substitutes for teacher feedback. The emergence of AI-assisted writing tools, such as ChatGPT, has further transformed the perspective of EAP writing instruction. Unlike earlier AWE systems, large language models have the ability to generate intelligible, appropriate academic prose relatable to the context and provide more subtle suggestions for revision. Recent classroom-based studies have explored the ways students use ChatGPT to brainstorm ideas, rephrase arguments, and model academic genres (Bin-Nashwan, Sadallah, & Bouteraa, 2023; Lee & Moore, 2024). Although

students have reported increased confidence and minimal writing anxiety, deeper concerns still prevail about the originality of the text, the authenticity of the source, and the risk of dependency. Instructors are now challenged to promote ethical AI use by teaching students to critically evaluate AI-generated content and integrate it into their writing responsibly. Moreover, teachers' perspectives on AI tools in EAP vary within a wide range of perspectives. Nguyen (2024) reports that while some educators view AI as a valuable support tool, others fear the consequences it may promote, which include undermining the writing autonomy of students and obliterating the boundaries of academic authorship. Their study highlights the lack of clearly mentioned pedagogical guidelines for the integration of AI tools in language education, which creates uncertainty and resistance among instructors. These tensions indicate a broader need for institutional training and policy development that clarifies the role of AI in EAP writing support and sets a prominent boundary.

Learning management systems (LMS) and online platforms also support EAP pedagogy by enabling access to resources, unsynchronized writing tasks, and feedback from the instructor. Discussion boards, video feedback, and e-portfolios that support engagement and formative assessment are often integrated with merged and fully online EAP courses (Whitney, 2013). Figure 1 below illustrates how these tools help enhance the autonomy of students and support differentiated instruction. However, discrepancies in students' digital readiness and teachers' technological training often limit the effectiveness of such innovations, especially in contexts with limited resources.

Along with linguistic tools, cross-cultural support systems, and multimodal resources are spontaneously being recognized as appreciated assets in EAP classrooms. Video lectures, infographics, and tutorials that are interactive can help learners visualize abstract academic conventions, while multilingual glossaries and cultural comparison tasks can help promote a deeper understanding of discourse norms (Jocius, 2020). These approaches are particularly relevant for Chinese students who may struggle with implicit aspects of academic communication, such as hedging, evaluative language, or disciplinary stance. Innovation of technology in EAP writing instruction remains irregular despite these advances. Many programs still lack institutional support, clarity of policies on AI use, and adequate training provided to educators. Furthermore, the risk of accepting technology by assuming that digital tools can resolve problems related to pedagogy, without thoughtful integration, must be carefully avoided. As research by Gimenez et al. (2025) suggests, successful technological interventions in EAP pivot on how they are embedded within a broader framework of the development of the learner, including critical thinking, reflective practice, and academic participation on an ethical basis.

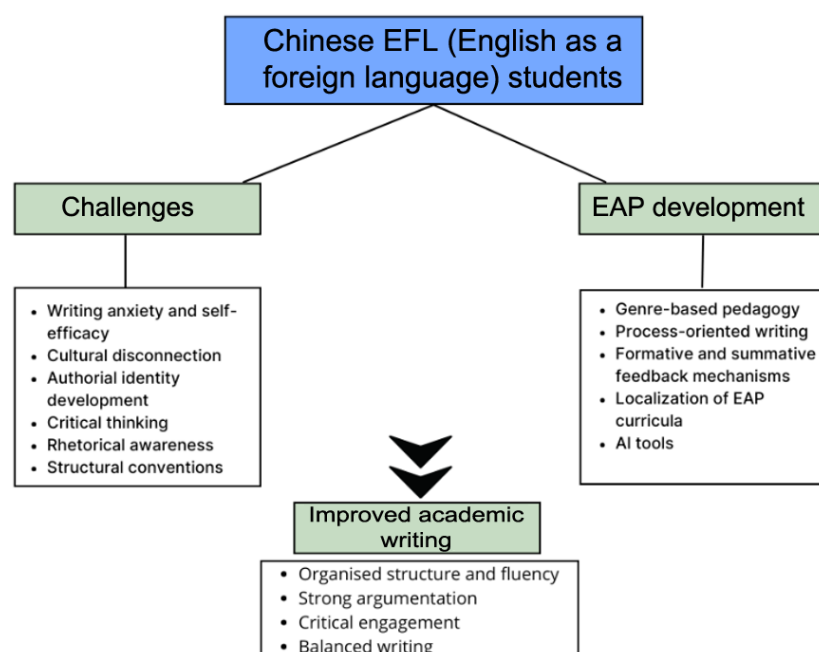


Figure 1. EAP improves academic writing skills among Chinese students.

To summarize, it can be asserted that technology can afford significant EAP writing instruction, from intensifying feedback mechanisms to diversifying learning resources. Yet its value depends on pedagogical intentionality, conscious educational approach, the mediation of the educator, and student engagement. Future innovations must prioritize not only functional efficiency but also epistemic development and intercultural awareness in academic writing. Figure 1 illustrates how these tools.

6. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS AND IDENTIFIED GAPS

Despite conducting extensive research in the field of EAP regarding course design, instructional methods, and technological applications, several prominent voids remain. Future research needs to explore the localization of EAP curricula, the optimization of academic writing instruction in intercultural contexts, and the application of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI). Based on the review of current literature, several areas present promising directions for further investigation. However, most existing literature focuses on top-tier research institutions, leaving unexplored how EAP curricula are implemented in regional and non-elite universities in China. These settings often lack access to experienced EAP professionals or flexible curriculum policies, making adaptation particularly challenging. Li and Ma (2020) observe that several educators lack systematic training in genre pedagogy, formative assessment, or digital tool integration, which limits their ability to deliver consistent pedagogical and student-centered instruction. Similarly, Du (2025) highlights that EAP teachers often experience alienation within academic institutions, as their work is frequently perceived as supplementary rather than an integral part of disciplinary teaching. Addressing this issue requires a stronger commitment to long-term professional development and collaborative curriculum design within institutions.

The localization of EAP curricula in non-Anglophone contexts is highly prioritized by researchers. Globalization, on one hand, has facilitated the worldwide spread of EAP programs, and on the other, many of these curricula are still structured based on Western educational frameworks. These, however, may not adjust to the cultural and pedagogical backgrounds of Chinese students. Existing studies have observed that Western academic writing emphasizes critical thinking and individual argumentation, whereas Chinese education tends to focus on exam preparation and rote memorization (Xie, Smith, & Davies, 2025).

Therefore, there is an urgent need to explore the adaptation of EAP instruction and how it can be effectively practiced in terms of content, pedagogy, and assessment criteria. For instance, Yin, Fan, Jin, and Stapleton (2024) propose a framework for integrating critical thinking into EAP speaking assessments, which emphasizes the importance of aligning cognitive demands with the instructional practices of academic communication. Similarly, Yin, Saad, and Halim (2023) highlight the incorporation of critical thinking pedagogies in EFL writing instruction, which have the ability to enhance students' analytical and evaluative skills, essential for navigating intercultural academic environments.

The enhancement of academic writing instruction in intercultural settings is another related area for exploration. As more Chinese students study in English-medium institutions worldwide, they encounter diverse academic norms that tend to challenge their writing practices. Although some research has examined the existing disparities between Chinese and Western academic writing cultures, there appears to be a lack of research on how to meaningfully integrate intercultural academic expectations into EAP teaching. For instance, Zhang and Hadjioannou (2022) highlight that Chinese graduate students harness their first language resources to navigate and express complex ideas and meticulously utilize language blending practices in their English academic writing. This approach helps learners exercise their pre-existing knowledge of language and ideas to mobilize thoughts and expressions. This also allows them to minimize their fear of failing in academic writing in the English language, which can also be modified gradually.

Similarly, Douglas and Rosvold (2018) emphasise the importance of formulating intercultural communicative competence in EAP classrooms and suggest that the incorporation of projects and intercultural interactions can

enhance students' sensitivity to cultural differences and improve their academic writing skills. Research in the near future can address how to make the most of cultural diversity for the improvement of writing instruction, enabling students to both understand and adopt international academic conventions, and at the same time, preserve their own rhetorical identities.

A rapidly developing research frontier can be evidently represented by technological advancement and, more particularly, the application of artificial intelligence in EAP. While most existing studies have focused on the role of AI in grammar correction and language fluency enhancement (Chen & Gong, 2025), the broader pedagogical potential of AI remains underexplored.

Future investigations could examine how it is possible to offer real-time, personalized feedback for writing that not only enhances linguistic accuracy but also supports the development of critical thinking and structural coherence by the AI tools. For instance, Zhang (2025) demonstrated that students' organization and content development in writing tasks are significantly enriched by AI-generated feedback. Similarly, Zhang, Aubrey, Huang, and Chiu (2025) found that if AI feedback is combined with human tutor input, it leads to greater improvements in critical thinking and organizational skills among L2 writers. For example, AI-assisted writing systems could be formulated to detect weaknesses in student writing and provide targeted, scaffolded guidance to promote deeper academic engagement. In addition, the matter of the preparedness of educators for AI integration deserves further investigation.

While potential and significant benefits are offered by AI tools, their implementation inside the classroom relies largely on the digital literacy of teachers and their pedagogical confidence. Recent research suggests that many EAP instructors feel incompetent due to a lack the training to guide students in ethical and effective AI use (Kohnke, Zou, & Zhang, 2022; Nguyen, 2024). Future studies could explore how institutions can provide systematic support and develop policy guidelines that balance innovation with integrity.

Another rarely explored issue is the influence of AI tools in fostering students' authorial voice and rhetorical identity. Although AI-generated content provides sophisticated vocabulary and fluent sentence structures, it may also standardize writing style and obscure the uniqueness of students' expression. This raises important questions regarding originality, ownership of styles, and the development of an academic stance. Mhilli (2023) argues that authorial voice is not merely a matter of style but reflects the psychological perspective of the students within academic discourse.

Table 1 presents how the rhetorical experimentation could be potentially discouraged by overreliance on generative AI systems and can lead to over-standardized academic prose. Future research should therefore investigate the ways to help students engage with AI tools in methods that keep their rhetorical agency intact and support the construction of the identity of a confident and credible writer.

Integrating critical thinking into academic writing instruction constantly warrants scholarly attention beyond AI. Despite the recognition of critical thinking in academic writing, EAP courses often emphasize correct grammar usage and adherence to conventions at the expense of higher-order reasoning.

Many students, particularly in EFL contexts, struggle to analyze independently and articulate authentic perspectives (Ying, Bidal, Barker, & Lee, 2023). Future research should examine instructional approaches that effectively embed critical thinking into writing tasks, encouraging students to evaluate sources, form evidence-based arguments, and develop a confident authorial voice.

Lastly, the systems of assessment used in EAP and the provision of personalized learning pathways merit crucial examination. Linguistic proficiency is often prioritized by traditional assessment methods, with partial attention paid to the cognitive and analytical development of students during the writing process (Bunch, 2006). Future research could investigate methods for designing more inclusive and formative assessment frameworks that effectively capture students' growth in academic integration and innovation. Consequently, the rise of personalized

learning has raised questions regarding how technology can be used to offer personalized support and feedback that synchronize with learners' individual profiles and writing trajectories.

Table 1 presents how the rhetorical experimentation

Table 1. Challenges and strategies for EAP improvement.

Challenges	Solution
Writing anxiety and low efficacy	Peer mentoring programs and feedback
Lack of critical thinking	Epistemic engagement
Authorial identity issues	AI-generated content and rhetorical learning
Grammar correction	Genre-based learning
Issue in rhetorical organisation	Targeted scaffolding
Over-reliance on AI tools	Ethical AI usage with human feedback

In conclusion, future research on EAP writing instruction should address the localization of curricula and the intercultural adaptation of academic writing pedagogy. It must also focus on the use of AI for educational purposes and the integration of critical thinking into the expansion of writing abilities. These areas provide intricate refinement of EAP methodologies and also offer effective solutions to the challenges of academic communication in a globalized world.

7. CONCLUSION

This review has examined how English for Academic Purposes (EAP) instruction supports the development of academic writing skills among Chinese students. Analysis of recent empirical and theoretical literature has shown that EAP programs play an essential role in equipping learners with linguistic, rhetorical, and cognitive resources. These, when well-designed and contextually responsive, are necessary to participate in global academic discourse. In particular, EAP courses, by helping students overcome language-related and cultural barriers, have proven effective in promoting writing strategies, academic conventions, and critical engagement.

EAP has been valued not only as a mechanism for language support but also as a space for academic socialization and intellectual development, according to the findings. Instructions of EAP facilitate students' transformation from surface-level language learning to mastering argumentation skills, discipline-specific genres, and scholarly positioning. In the Chinese context, where students often enter higher education with limited exposure to Western academic writing norms, EAP courses provide targeted scaffolding that enhances both performance and confidence in academic expression.

Despite the considerable expansion of the body of literature on EAP and academic writing, several critical gaps remain. There is appropriate confirmation of the pedagogical value of genre-based instruction, process writing models, and feedback-rich environments by the existing research. However, challenges persist in areas such as writing transfer across disciplines, the integration of critical thinking, and the pedagogical use of new technologies. The evolution of AI-assisted tools, in particular, though presents new opportunities to personalize learning and support clarified forms of written communication, it requires further observational research, inquiry, and ethical consideration.

Looking ahead, the development of EAP programs that continues in China and similar contexts will be based on extensive research that is grounded theoretically, methodologically robust, and sensitive to local educational realities. Key priorities include designing curricula that reflect learners' cultural backgrounds, developing assessment methods that capture academic thinking as well as language proficiency, and preparing instructors to navigate the demands of intercultural pedagogy.

To sum up, it can be said that EAP remains a vital component of academic success for non-native English speakers in globalized higher education. By offering sustained and reflective support for academic writing, EAP instruction can empower learners not only to meet the requirements of the institutions but also to contribute

meaningfully to international academic dialogue. Future innovations in curriculum design, instructional practice, and technology integration will further enhance the transformative potential of EAP in shaping equitable and inclusive academic environments.

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