The role of materials in EAP teacher development

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Overview

- Metaphors for language learning
  - Two views of how languages are learned
  - Impact on materials for teaching writing
  - Paragraphs, noun phrases and cohesion
- Target needs in the EAP environment
  - Target needs in terms of critical thinking
  - How these are met in published materials
  - How teachers can exploit or supplement these
- What teachers want

Metaphors for language learning

- ## Acquisition

Brains hardwired for language
Mind is a container
Language is a commodity to be processed and stored
Conduit metaphor – ideas transferred between minds

Sfard (1998) Block (2003)

- ## Participation

Language acquired through interaction in social settings
Mental activity among minds – neither self nor other
Emphasis on performance and joining a community of practice

Resources for language learning

- Acquisition

Resources for acquisition – input from learning environment
Language description – sentence level grammatical structures
Focus on learner interlanguage development

Block (2003)

- Participation

Resources for participation – language in mind
Language description – text level functions and genres
Focus on learner identity in a social community

Government health warning

We want to make it clear that neither we nor Sfard are prepared to propose the new metaphor [i.e. participation] as a replacement for the acquisition metaphor. Rather it is intended as a complement to the older metaphor, since… it makes visible aspects of second language learning that the acquisition metaphor leaves hidden.

Pavlenko and Lantolf, 2000, cited in Block 2003, p. 106

Implications for teaching writing

- Acquisition

Focus on negotiation of meaning
Language viewed as self-contained system governed by a set of rules
Learners responsible for synthesising components for their own purposes
Focus on writer's creative process
Writing viewed as a generic skill which transfers to any context
Relationship between writing & knowledge construction ignored

- Participation

Focus on negotiation of identity
Language viewed as texts embedded in social contexts
Learners responsible for using conventions to interact with audiences for specific purposes
Focus on readers' understanding
Writing viewed as context-specific dependent on community norms
Close relationship between writing & knowledge construction

Feez (1998), Street (2009)

Impact on teaching writing

- Acquisition

Relationship between writing & knowledge construction ignored
Main genre is essay
Binary view of truth value of claims (agree or disagree…?)
Traditional heuristics for writing paragraphs in texts:
 topic sentences
 supporting evidence,
 cohesive devices
Plagiarism avoidance – synonyms, passive-active transformations

- Participation

Close relationship between writing & knowledge construction
Wider variety of genres
More nuanced view of truth value of claims (to what extent…?)
Reader orientation to development of ideas in texts:
 general to specific
 familiar to new
 summarising noun phrases
Scholarship – finding a voice; passive – a thematising device

Duncan (2007), Street (2009)

Impact on published coursebooks

- Acquisition

'core skills, tasks and academic language that are common to most disciplines'
'texts and topics which are presented for the non-expert user'
Oxford EAP Teacher's Handbook p 4

'academic skills and language needed for university study'
'topics and texts … of interest to students working in all subjects'
Cambridge AE Teacher's Book p 5

- Participation

students approach course content from different perspectives…
write about these in relation to what they know and to their own discipline
Oxford EAP Teacher's Handbook p 4

students develop abilities relevant to their particular area of study
Academic English corpus provides authentic examples of how language is used
Cambridge AE Teacher's Book p 4, 5

De Chazal & McCarter (2012) Hewings (2012)

Writing for a community of practice

- Academic English texts are 'writer responsible' – the writer and not the reader has to make the message clear.

- General to specific development helps readers because it provides

  - a general idea of the topic linking to what readers already know

  - more specific ideas to build towards a detailed picture.

- Ideas flow from one sentence to another – new information at the end of one sentence becomes familiar information at the beginning of the next.

- Familiar information relates to the **topic** of the paragraph
new information develops the **point** of the message.

- Cohesive noun phrases, e.g. *this issue, this reason*, can summarize new information – labelling it as familiar to provide a basis for the next point.

- If students can master the principles of general to specific and familiar to new and organize their writing using the moves expected by their academic community, then the readers of their texts will not notice occasional grammatical errors.

Argent & Alexander (forthcoming) referring to Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) & Fries (1981)

Paragraphs in coursebooks

- Acquisition

'A paragraph can be defined as a unit of meaning which contains a statement about the content / organisation of the paragraph (a topic sentence) which may then be followed by supporting evidence using examples and reasons.'
Oxford EAP p 44

- Participation

'the topic sentence prepares the reader for the rest of the paragraph'
Oxford EAP Teacher's Handbook p 35

'A claim is a statement or judgement made by a writer. Writers try to persuade the reader that claims are true. Readers evaluate claims: has the writer convinced us that they are true?'
Cambridge Academic English p 33

De Chazal & McCarter (2012) Hewings (2010)

Noun phrases in coursebooks

- Acquisition

Noun phrases 'are useful because they can often express a large amount of information in a few words' and 'help to summarise and link information' *Oxford EAP* p 21, 26

'Using a complex noun phrase is often more efficient than expressing the same idea with a verb. In academic writing there is a greater focus on using nouns, which carry the meaning of the language.' *Cambridge AE Teacher's Book* p 27

- Participation

'The longer the noun phrase is… the easier it is for the reader to identify what you are talking about. Academic texts use long noun phrases to label ideas precisely.' *Access EAP: Frameworks*

De Chazal & McCarter (2012) Argent & Alexander (2010 & forthcoming)

Noun phrases in coursebooks

- Acquisition

NP patterns: noun + noun or

noun + prepositional phrase,

e.g. *a common law system,*
   a system of common laws

'It is very difficult to provide rules for working out which pattern sounds more natural and is more likely to be used.' *Oxford EAP* p 34

- Participation

NP patterns: *the* + noun + *of* + noun + prepositional phrase

e.g. *the use of computers for teaching*

These NPs have space for more ideas They are typically used in academic text to present new ideas for the first time.

NP patterns: noun + noun

e.g. *using computers, computer use*

These NPs are used to repeat ideas from the longer NP later in the text in summarised form.

Access EAP: Foundations p 68

De Chazal & McCarter (2012) Argent & Alexander (2010 & forthcoming)

Cohesion in coursebooks

- Acquisition

'Cohesive language includes the words or phrases used to connect written ideas or information together to form a text. Authors first introduce an idea or subject, and then add more information about it. This means they need to refer to the ideas again using reference words like *this work*…'
'Ideas are connected through… phrases, e.g. *This argument* (an example of a cohesive noun phrase). *Oxford EAP* p 74

- Participation

'Texts are easier for readers to understand if sentences develop from familiar to new ideas.'
'The new information at the end of one sentence can be repackaged as familiar information at the beginning of the next.'
A summarising noun phrase, e.g. *this low figure*, 'labels ideas as being familiar and creates a link back to previous ideas'.
Access EAP: Foundations p 177

De Chazal & McCarter (2012) Argent & Alexander (2010)

Target needs in the EAP environment

What approaches to critical thinking are used in published EAP materials?

Do they really meet the target needs in the EAP environment?

How can teachers exploit or supplement these approaches?

Critical approaches identified*

- Curiosity, engagement, taking ownership
- Awareness of purposes & expectations in the academic context
- Awareness of the subject, professional & real world contexts
- Applied thinking & looking for meaning
- Self criticality:

'They should be able to stand over everything they say'

*Based on focus group discussions with staff from Heriot-Watt University: Urban Studies, Chemical Engineering , Business Management, Life sciences.

What is criticality?

The ability to ask the right questions, mainly

ITOW?

In terms of what ?

Simplistic definitions of criticality tend to focus on the ability to

~~Criticize~~

rather than the practice of judging according to pre-established

criteria
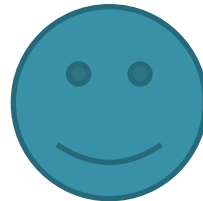
Simplistic approaches to criticality, deal with it as a top level issue

rather than a self-reflective habit that goes right down to thinking about the meaning of the words we use, for example…

Criticality at word level

The sustainability test

Students like to talk about

- o   sustainable energy

- o   sustainable business

- o   sustainable society

…. *sustainable*   *ITOW??*

How is this reflected in EAP coursebooks?

- These are written and published under considerable commercial and space constraints.

- This generates pressure to be linear rather than recursive in presenting different aspects of academic communication.

- The result is that the criticality may be presented as an issue (usually in the final unit) rather than fostered as a habit.

How is criticality dealt with in coursebooks?
Earlier books….

- Distinguish facts and opinions but the 'facts' are not contextualised/ referenced.

    First Steps in Academic Writing and *Academic Writing*

- 'Critical evaluation of points of view' is one of marking criteria
- Focus downwards on text functions rather than text purpose.

    Academic Writing Course

- Genre and readership introduced at the outset
- Participative methodology based around peer assessment.
- CT not explicit but deals with *categories for evaluation*, writing principles: *Relevance – Reality –* (reader awareness) *– Honesty* but not explicitly tied to genre and purpose.
- Citation and plagiarism dealt with as 'issues' in final unit.

    Study Writing

Hogue(2007) Bailey(2003) Jordan(2004) Hamp-Lyons & Heasley (2006)

How is criticality dealt with in coursebooks?

- '…Writers and lecturers will often present you with arguments, trying to persuade you to accept certain ideas… Critical thinking involves judging these arguments.'
- A single dimension of criticality (~~criticizing~~)
- Evaluative criteria, self-criticality and how this will feed into student's writing are not made explicit
- Referencing and plagiarism dealt with as 'issues'
  Cambridge Academic English

- Participative model: students encouraged to explore the 'why' choices in citation, quotation and paraphrasing, before the 'how'.
  Telling a Research Story

Hewings (2012)   Feak and Swales (2009)

How is criticality dealt with in coursebooks?

- Explicit
  'evaluating, making conceptual links and supporting ideas with relevant evidence' *AEAP* T's Book: 6
  ' ...in many critical thinking tasks, checklists or lists of criteria are given as guidelines.' *OEAP* T's Book: 7
- Recursive approach – CT tasks in every unit
- Incremental – (particularly AEAP – start by guessing the ages of a group of students – progress to evaluating graphic data on global warming debate)
- Participation model: students encouraged to explore their own target context (but essays only in OEAP)

Argent & Alexander (2010)   De Chazal & McCarter (2012)

What do teachers need to do?

- Ask whether a course book has the stated aim of including critical thinking.

- Be aware of different terminology individual coursebook writers may use to refer to aspects of criticality.

- Check which dimensions of critically are included and supplement these by exploit existing texts and tasks for critical thinking opportunities …

- Particularly, in terms of more focus on academic context and purpose and on self-criticality, rather than a topic focus

- Be prepared to supplement existing coursebook provision to bring in CT in earlier and vertically through the units, right down to language use: for example, the 'sustainability' test'.

Don't deal with the issue: foster the habit!

In short....

Teachers need to think critically!

What are teachers looking for in coursebooks…

…and does what they are finding meet both their students' needs and their own?

My bio data:

Her areas of interest are: academic writing, plagiarism, vocabulary acquisition, language testing, materials development and the international student experience.

Who are EAP teachers these days?

Experienced EAP
- MA TESOL
- 23 years (27 years)

- Novice EAP
  - 10 years EFL and ESOL, 1 year EAP
  - CELTA, DELTA and MA ELT

- Novice
  - CELTA – less than one year

What's behind the growth in teachers new to EAP?

Box C3.1. Long-term growth in the number of students enrolled outside their country of citizenship

Growth in internationalisation of tertiary education (1975-2009, in millions)

| 1975 0.8 m | 1980 1.1 m | 1985 1.1 m | 1990 1.3 m | 1995 1.7 m | 2000 2.1 m | 2005 3.0 m | 2009 3.7 m |
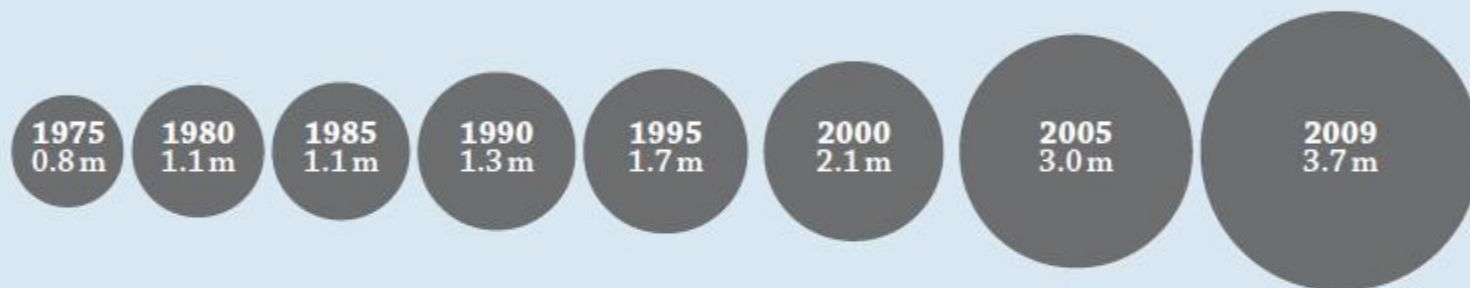
Source: OECD and UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

Data on foreign enrolment worldwide comes from both the OECD and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). UIS provided the data on all countries for 1975-95 and most of the non-OECD countries for 2000, 2005 and 2009. The OECD provided the data on OECD countries and the other non-OECD economies in 2000 and 2009. Both sources use similar definitions, thus making their combination possible. Missing data were imputed with the closest data reports to ensure that breaks in data coverage do not result in breaks in time series.

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932461617

- The reworking of the global higher education landscape continues to generate a wide array of ripple effects at a range of scales (from the local through to the global).

   (Professor Kris Olds, University of Wisconsin-Madison)

   http://globalhighered.wordpress.com/2011/09/13/international-student-mobility-highlights-in-the-oecds-education-at-a-glance-2011/

Ripple Effect – EAP Programme Numbers and Size

- Pre-sessional student numbers
  - Nottingham Trent - 350
  - Leicester - 600
  - Manchester – 800
  - Southampton – 800
- Emergence of FE level and private provision:
  - Foundation
  - Diploma
  - Pre-masters
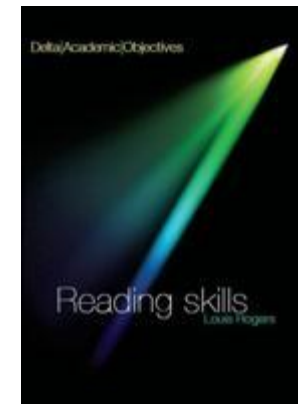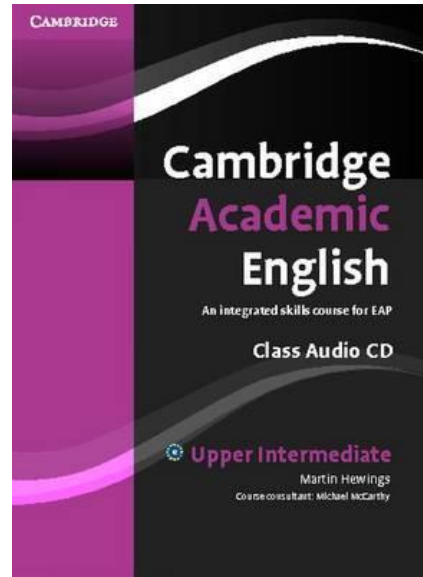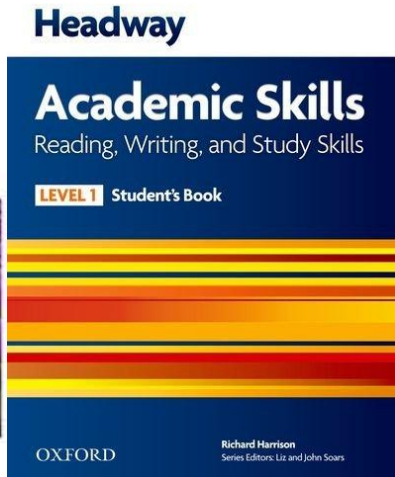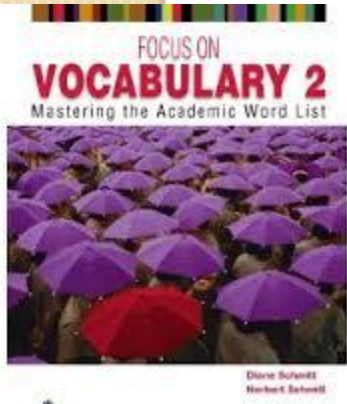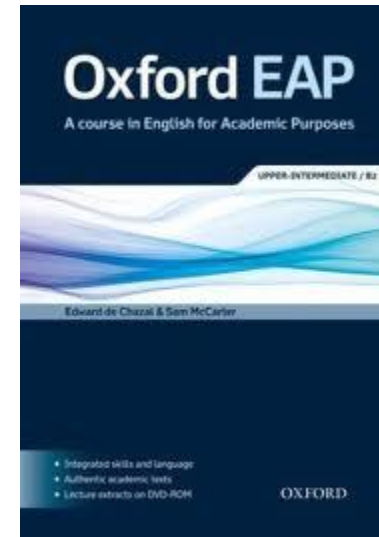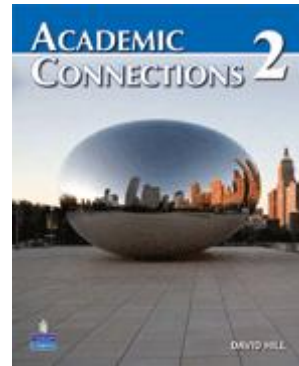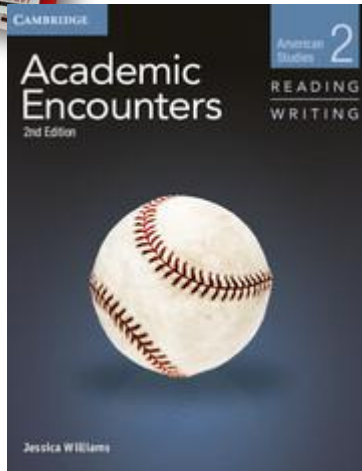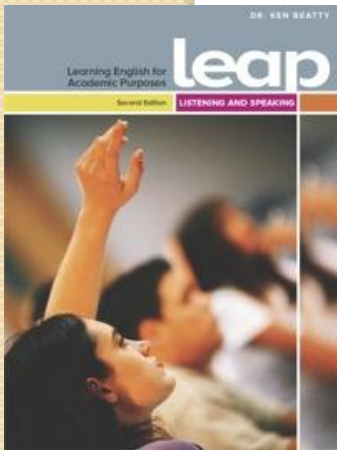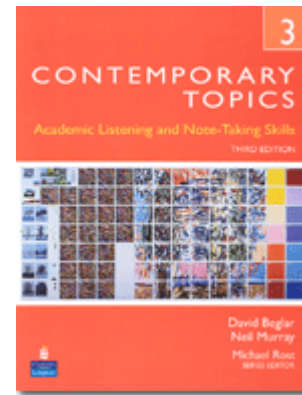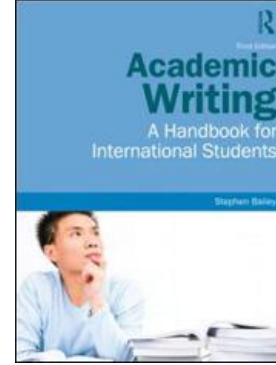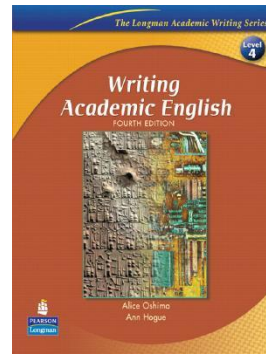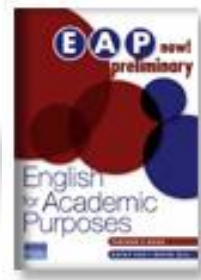
What are teachers, course coordinators and managers looking for in coursebooks/materials?

What role might textbooks play in teacher development?

Beliefs about learning to teach EAP

I truly believe that EAP can be picked up with practice, and support, and that there is really no need for a distinct qualification in this field. As long as the teacher is experienced and is given a thorough induction and on-going support the need to pay to study for such an EAP certificate/diploma can be avoided.

From Alexander, (2011)

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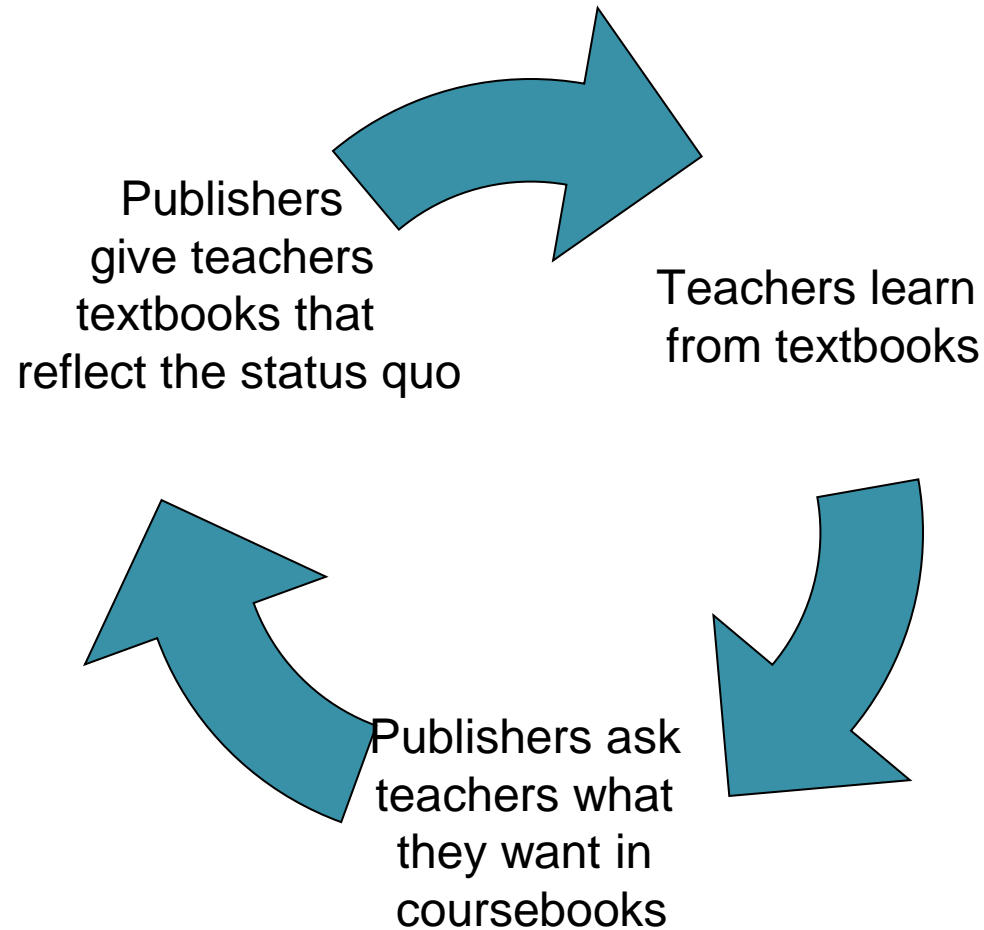
From Alexander, (2011)

Break the cycle

Publishers give teachers textbooks that reflect the status quo

Teachers learn from textbooks

Publishers ask teachers what they want in coursebooks

Landmarks in understandings of EAP

- Swales – *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings* - 1990
- Hyland – *Writing without conviction? Hedging in science research articles* - 1996
- Coxhead – *The Academic Word List* – 2000
- BALEAP - *TEAP Competencies* - 2008
- Nesi and Gardner – *Genres across the disciplines* - 2012

Textbooks need to…
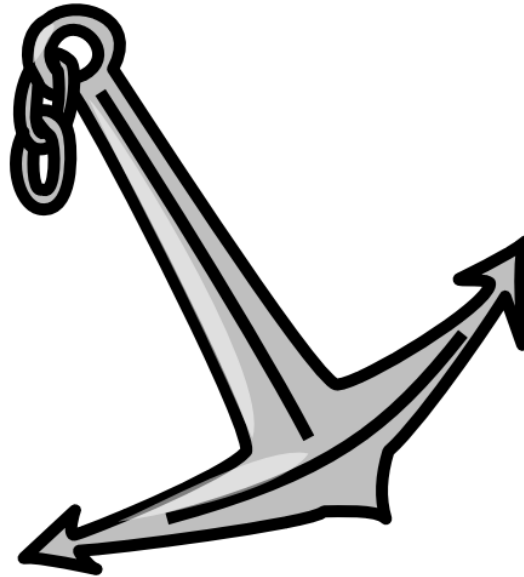
Prototypical texts & rules of thumb

Disciplinary differences

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