

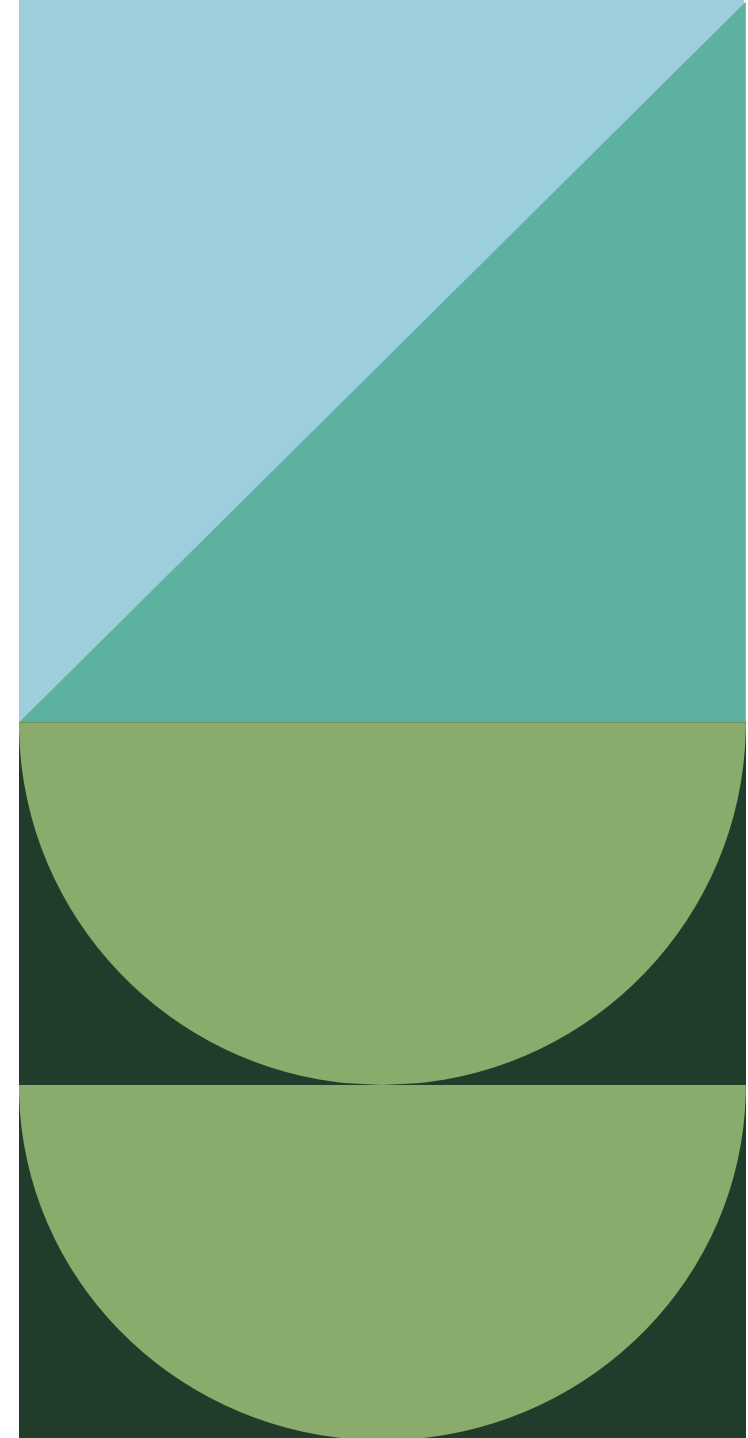
Oral academic literacy for seminar learning

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Introduction

- Current EAP approaches to oral academic literacy for seminar learning
- Understandings of academic seminar settings in the Academy
- Empirical research conducted in the discipline of media and communication
- Pedagogical implications of the research



Context

'Seminars are a defining event in UK higher education' (Heron, 2018, p.112)


'Oral communication.... [is] considered a key to students' classroom success and a skill that is highly valued in both academic and professional contexts' (Siczek, 2022, p.3)

'Oral genres are places where the knowledge of the discipline is negotiated and learned' (Dannels, 2001, p.148)

'Classroom interaction where students are engaged in academic speaking has been found to be key to developing disciplinary understanding' (Dippold and Heron, 2021, p.3)

Title	Author(s) and year	Degree of seminar focus	Degree of disciplinary
Cambridge Academic English Upper Intermediate Student Book	Hewings (2012)	Limited. Functional skills and summarising	None
Access EAP	Argent and Alexander (2013)	Limited. Skills such as supporting claims with research	None
English for Academic Purposes	De Chazal (2014)	Limited.	Disciplinarity discussed but principally written genres
Teaching English for Academic Purposes	Kostka and Olmstead-Wang (2014)	Limited. Focus on discussion skills	None
Study Skills	Cottrell (2019)	Limited. Functional skills and self-evaluation	None
Oxford English for Academic Purposes Advanced	Chazal, Hughes (2015)	Reasonable.	Limited but range of texts
EAP Essentials	Alexander, Argent and Spencer (2019)	Limited. Focus on establishing a critical position	Generic approach but awareness of disciplinary

Current EAP approaches to oral academic literacy for seminar learning


- Generalised descriptions of academic seminars
 - Strong emphasis on presentation skills
 - Focus on dynamics of collaborative groupwork
 - Tendency for functional language to feature strongly
 - Absence of empirical basis for proposed pedagogy
 - Lack of disciplinarity in the description and understandings of academic seminars
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The research

Research questions:

- What format do seminars take in media and communication?
- What are the functions of these activities?

Methodology:

- Interviews with 35 students
 - Interviews with 10 media and communication lecturers
 - Twenty classroom observations
 - Academic programme-related documentation
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The findings


The nature of the discipline determined the spaces in which the seminars took place (e.g., **media pods** to facilitate access to online applications, **digital learning labs** for photography, video-editing, broadcasting, standard classrooms for literature-based sessions)

Classroom-based formats

- Seminars were exclusively teacher-led (at times opening with student presentation)
- Seminars principally based on small-group or individual tasks with limited plenary debate

The findings

The functions of seminar activities

1. Develop students' critical understanding of the academic field
 2. Develop students' ability to conduct academic and professional research
 3. Develop students' digital production and media-related skills
 4. Prepare students for employment in the media industries
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The findings

Develop students' critical understanding of the academic field

- a) In class *analysis of news stories* and headlines to explore aspects such as framing and balance in terms of gender/race/political positioning (Journalism studies)
- b) In class *discussion of out-of-class experiences of data scraping* in relation to literature on the subject (Digital media studies)
- c) In class *group planning tasks*, such as deciding the rules and structures for a new news agency (Journalism studies)
- d) In class *group presentations* of literature reviews (Critical issues in media)
- e) In class individual *presentation of chosen images*, such as magazine covers featuring politicians or migrants (Visual communication)

The findings

Develop students' critical understanding of the academic field

- f) In class *debates* with adversarial teams on issues such as whether tabloid news is good for democracy (Political communication)
- g) In class *reading aloud of own script-writing* for group feedback (Film, photography and media script writing)
- h) In class *group activity planning* a propagandist recruitment campaign (War and media)
- i) In class *individual presentation of social media content* which students have posted with reference to Habermas (Citizenship and digital media)
- j) In class *role plays* in which independent record label and a major player vie to persuade a recording artist to join them (Media industries)

The findings

Develop students' ability to conduct academic and professional research

- a) In class *interviews* with other students about how they present themselves on social media (Feminism and media studies)
- b) In class *data content analysis*, such as coding of tweets and interview data (Research methods)
- c) In class *group evaluation* of given survey questions (Research methods)
- d) In class *design of research* to explore audience responses to reality TV shows (Media industries and reality televisions)
- e) In class *group discussion* of ethical research case studies (Research methods)

The findings

Develop students' digital production and other media-related skills

- a) In class *HTML writing and website production* (Digital media)
- b) In class *production of videos and podcasts* (Digital creative practices)
- c) In class *use of applications*, such as Adobe, Photoshop and video-editing software (Digital media)
- d) In class *short film production* (Film, photography and media)
- e) In class *production of broadcast journalism outputs* (Broadcast journalism)

The findings

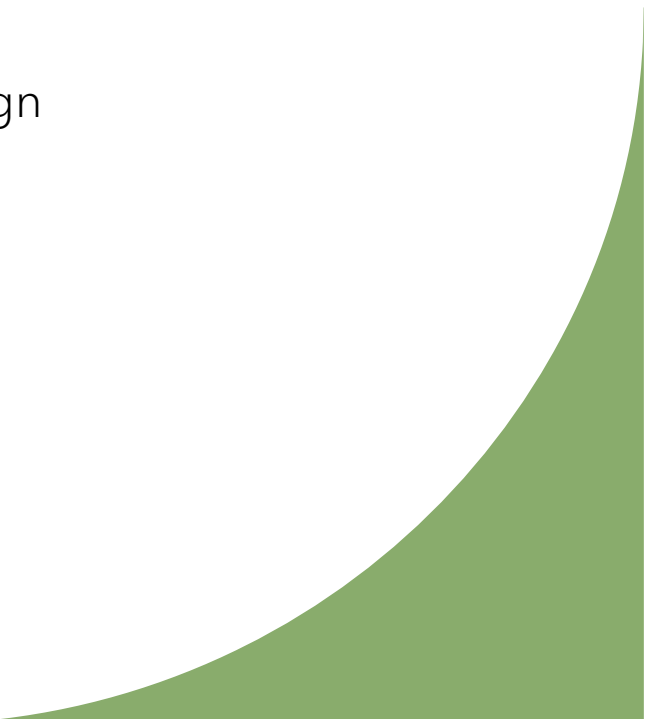
Prepare students for employment in the creative industries

- a) Students *pitch their software designs* to potential clients (Digital media studies)
- b) Students *share their experiences* of their work placements in the media industry according to themes such as alienation (Media industries)
- c) Students *plan in groups who they would invite to participate* in a radio debate (Broadcast journalism)

Pedagogical implications of the research

- 1) Learners within the discipline of media and communication studies are faced with a wide range of seminar formats
- 2) The formats and content are distinct from generalisation depictions of seminars and shaped by the specific discipline
- 3) A range of disciplinary purposes can be identified in these seminar formats, such as the development of technological skills and employability
- 4) EAP practitioners will need to prepare students to operate in a range of media and communication seminar formats

Pedagogical implications of the research

- 5) Media studies students should be informed of the range of seminar formats and activities that they can be expected to engage in
 - 6) Learners can develop a deeper understanding of why certain formats and activities are introduced on degree programme
 - 7) EAP practitioners can adopt a more evidence-based approach to the design of pedagogic tasks and linguistic foci
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Questions



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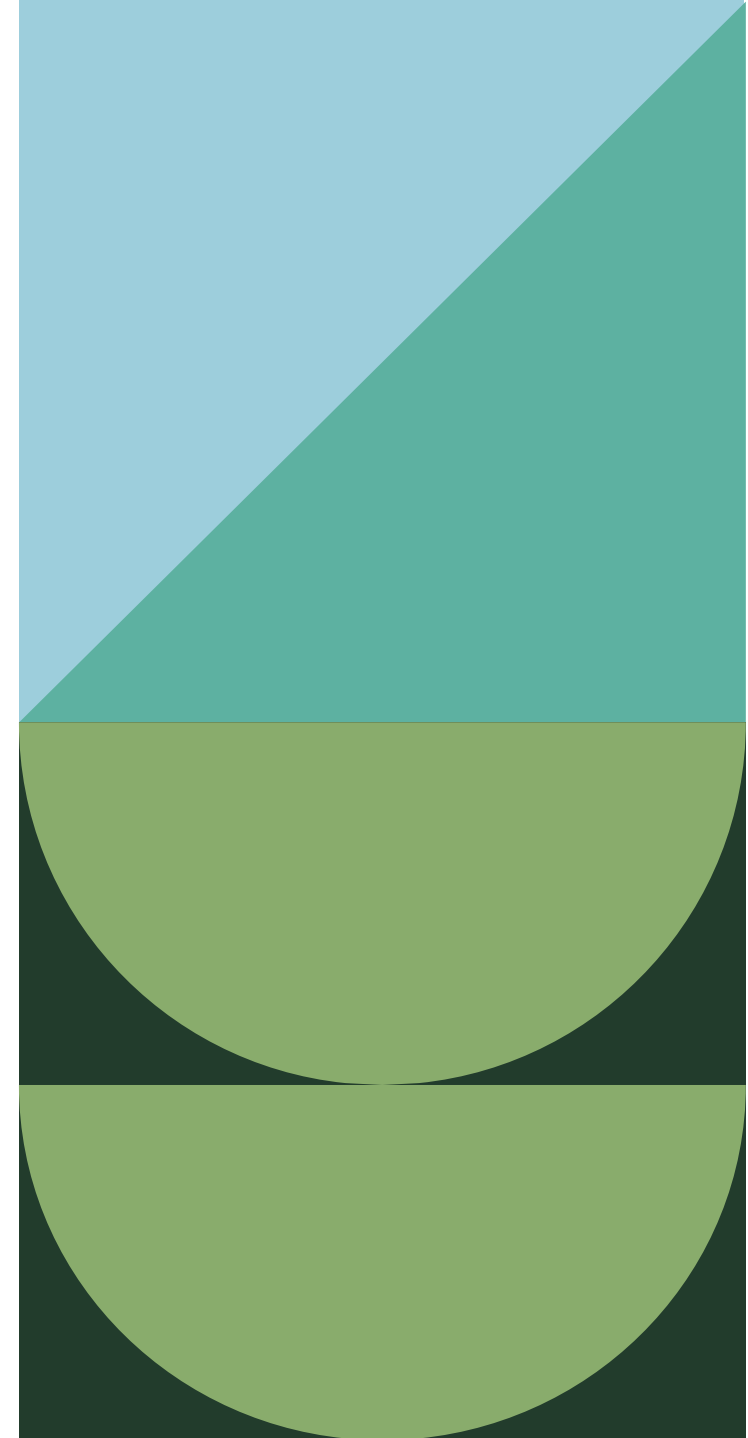
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