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## Quo Vadis, EAP?

### Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats in Transformative Times

In the sixty or so years of EAP's existence, few could deny that it has achieved a great deal. Since its emergence as a sub-discipline of ESP in the 1970s, EAP is now able to boast its own dedicated journals, its own specific meta-language, its own professional organisations, its own cadre of internationally-recognised 'big names' and its own particular communities of practice. Taking each of these very positive developments into account, one might not unreasonably argue that EAP as a discipline has finally 'arrived' and that its professional future should remain stable and bright.

And yet.

While it is indisputable that many great things have been achieved, the development of EAP has not been without its grey areas and EAP as an academic discipline still has several significant blind-spots. For anyone working in the field, the lack of clarity around entry pathways to the profession as a whole, the comparatively low academic status for its practitioners, the precarious levels of job security, the very limited opportunities for career progression and the wide and ever-growing gap between research and practice are all instantly recognisable professional concerns. It is even more worrisome to note that although many of these issues were flagged for critical attention quite a few decades ago, relatively little appears to have been done to address them. None of this bodes particularly well for the ongoing security and stability of EAP as the discipline moves forward.

Beyond such systemic weaknesses, it must also be said that EAP now faces a range of other emerging challenges and threats. The effects of neo-liberalist attitudes to Higher Education in general, the proliferation of private EAP providers, the global economic, socio-cultural, and pedagogic changes caused by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the impact of political reforms on the status of English, also represent some potentially very dark clouds on EAP's wider horizon.

Given all of the above, now seems to be a particularly opportune time for practitioners to ask '*Quo Vadis, EAP?*' and reflect on where the discipline might be heading. Drawing on qualitative interview data gathered from two separate time periods a decade apart, this plenary therefore aims to provide a no-holds barred critical analysis of the current Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats facing EAP in these most transformative of times.