

# **BALEAP**

British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes

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## THIRTEENTH BALEAP CONFERENCE

"ASSESSMENT IN EAP"

## LIST OF ABSTRACTS



*Centre for Applied  
Language Studies*

Centre for Applied Language Studies

University of Wales Swansea

**J. Charles Alderson**  
Lancaster University

### **Testing in EAP: Progress? Achievement? Proficiency?**

The use to which a test is put, has long been recognised as the key to establishing a test's validity, which is classically defined as the extent to which the text measures what it aims to measure. Aim here clearly equates to purpose. Recently, however, testing theories have refined the concept of construct validity to encompass and subsume classical concepts like content concurrent and predictive validity. Furthermore, they have developed the notion of consequential validity, which is intended explicitly to focus test developers' minds on the consequences of their instruments: the uses to which they are put, the impact they have, and the consequences of the test for test users. It will be argued that while aspects of both construct and consequential validity need further refinement, the focus on consequences and use is a salutary reminder of the dangers of misuse.

I shall discuss cases of misuse: where proficiency tests are used to measure achievement or even progress, and argue that increasing pressures of accountability and value for money on EAP programmes run the danger that tests will increasingly be misused in the future. I shall assert the need for EAP programmes to pay much more attention to the development of appropriate measures of progress and achievement, if they are to avoid serious test misuse.

Finally, I shall present examples of test development and test validation, where attempts are being made to establish test validity, especially the IELTS test, from these new perspectives.

**S. Mohammad Alavi**  
Lancaster University

### **An Investigation of the Construct of Reading Comprehension Tests in an Academic Context: using Rhetorical Structure Theory**

This study examined a procedure to investigate the usefulness of employing Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST) (Mann and Thompson (1988)) in testing reading comprehension in an academic context. RST analysis detects the rhetorical relations, e.g. Restaurant, Elaboration, etc. which exist between two

non-overlapping text units. RST defines 33 rhetorical relations which are at the heart of RST text analysis.

I employed cloze procedures to test four rhetorical relations, i.e. Elaboration, Concession, Cause-and-Result and Restaurant between units of three passages extracted from a sociology textbook. To achieve this, I removed those content words which I judged played a role in indicating a rhetorical relation. Each item thus aimed to test a rhetorical relation. I hypothesised that restoring rhetorically acceptable words to the slots in each pair of text units implied an understanding of the rhetorical relation between these units.

Sixty-six first year undergraduate English native speaker sociology and linguistics students completed the tests. The responses were scored firstly in terms of their acceptability to three applied linguists and secondly according to how closely their responses expressed the original rhetorical relation between units of the texts. To examine the concurrent validity of the rhetorical relation scoring, the test and item statistics of these four scoring schemes were calculated separately. The results revealed that

- (1) the four scoring schemes were highly correlated,
- (2) the reliability coefficients and the discrimination indices from the rhetorical relation scoring were higher than those from the applied linguistics judgements.

This study suggests that testing students' understanding of rhetorical relations may be a valuable way of assessing their reading comprehension.

**Joan Allwright and Jayanti V. Banerjee**  
Lancaster University

### **Investigating the Accuracy of Admissions Criteria - a Case Study in a British University**

Lancaster University currently requires international students to provide evidence of their English language proficiency with a TOEFL score of no less than 560 or an IELTS score of no less than 6.00. In the face of recent pressure on the University to admit international students with test scores lower than those generally recommended, there is now a real need to establish to what extent students with lower language proficiency scores would be seriously at

risk.

In 1995-96 we tracked 38 international students on 1-year postgraduate courses, 21 of whom could be considered to be on or below the borderline in terms of English language proficiency at the start of their courses. We will present our analysis and interpretation of data gathered from all 38 students and their academic tutors concerning their academic performance. We will then focus on a sub-set of students whom we tracked more intensively because, both for them and their departments, their studying in English appears to have entailed considerable cost in terms of time, effort and strain.

**Mary Anne Ansell and Ros Floyd-Sanchez**  
University of Bath

### **Closing The Loop**

The paper will discuss the process of collection and analysis of data from students who have attended summer and full-year pre-session courses at the University of Bath. A small number of students will be subject to detailed observation in classes and also interviewed about their current degree courses as far as coping with the linguistic demands is concerned. Their tutors will also be interviewed. Video and audio material will be collected. In addition, a broader but less detailed follow-up survey of a bigger group of students from pre-session courses will be carried out. This will be questionnaire-based but also include interviews with relevant tutors.

The data collected will be analysed with a primary focus on clarifying in more detail the target language situations for which we are preparing students. The problems experienced by the students on their courses and their outstanding skills needs will be isolated and proposals for improving the content of future courses will be made on the basis of this analysis. It is expected that we will be able to make suggestions for improving the ability of students to interact in small groups on task-based work and making rapid, informal, native speech more accessible to non-native speakers of English.

**Dr. Alasdair Archibald**  
University of Southampton

### **Assessment and Progress in the Written Work of Pre-sessional Students**

Students on an eight-week Pre-sessional English language course in English for Academic Purposes were given a short (100-150 word) writing assignment at the beginning of their course. They were then given a similar assignment after four weeks and a slightly longer assignment (200-250 words) at the end of their course. These assignments were analysed using a rating scale that defines multiple traits - communicative quality, interestingness, referencing, organisation, argumentation, linguistic accuracy, and linguistic appropriacy - on nine point scales. Progress made across these traits by the students was compared with the assessment given by writing tutors for the students' written work throughout the course.

**Barbara Atherton**  
Kingston University

### **Developing Accuracy in Academic Writing: Students' Responses to Feedback and Error Correction**

This paper outlines the results of a three stage research project, conducted with groups of International students, into their attitudes towards writing for academic purposes and their reactions to feedback and error correction. Analysis of responses to a questionnaire shows that whilst students may be aware of areas of error and difficulty and require and appreciate the fullest correction of their work, few are taking appropriate or positive steps to apply and learn from feedback given. This is supported by the results of a small scale introspective study into how students reacted on the return of a piece of corrected work. It is suggested that it is necessary to increase the awareness of the student writers to the effects of errors on their written texts. A small scale study is described where five students recorded their essays onto tape and then listened to this taped version with the purpose of identifying and correcting errors. Whilst further research is required, it is tentatively suggested that this may be a valid additional technique for use in the development of accuracy in Second Language writing.

**George Blue**  
University of Southampton

### **"Can I? Can't I?" Self-Assessment and Defining Learners' Needs**

There has been a great deal of interest in recent years in self-assessment as a means of encouraging learners to think about their language proficiency. Many studies have drawn on global descriptive rating scales, where learners have typically given themselves an overall rating in each of the four language skills. Some doubt has been cast upon learners' ability to assess their language level accurately, and it has been suggested that over- and under- assessment may be linked to nationality in some cases.

This study describes a different kind of self-assessment rating scale, where learners are asked to respond to forty different statements about what they can do in the language. The results will be analysed both for internal consistency and for comparability with external language tests. Finally, there will be an attempt to answer a number of questions:

How useful is this kind of self-assessment?

How important is it to sensitise learners to what they can (and cannot) do in the language?

How seriously should we take learners' self-assessment?

Where do we go next?

**Dr. Esther Daborn / Moira Calderwood**  
University of Glasgow

### **The case for shared goals of language tutors and departmental staff: assessment criteria for reports written by students in Electrical Engineering**

It is assumed that any piece of written text has a specific purpose and audience in mind. This presents problems when two different audiences, i.e. departmental and language specialists, assess a text. However, this presentation suggests that the criteria for success in written engineering reports are similar enough for there to be beneficial results from collaboration. This view is based on the experience of work in a collaborative project to improve undergraduate student writing between the Electronic and Engineering Department and the English as a Foreign Language Unit at Glasgow University.

**Nick Charge**  
IELTS Subject Officer, UCLES

## **Question and Answer Session on IELTS**

**Alicia Cresswell**  
University of Newcastle

## **The Role of Portfolios in the Assessment of Student Writing on an EAP Course**

While writing tests consisting of one or more timed essay prompts are used widely to measure writing ability, there is growing awareness among teachers that this approach to assessment reflects neither the complexity of the writing process nor the diversity of text types that students produce on their courses.

In an attempt to address these issues in the context of a year-round EAP course, we are currently piloting an in-class portfolio assessment programme involving students at upper-intermediate and advanced levels. This paper describes the project, considers its strengths and weaknesses, and discusses the reactions of both students and teachers.

**Dr Joan Cutting**  
University of Sunderland

## **Can Written Assessments of Top Level International EAP Students Be Better Than Those of English Native Speaker Students?**

Marking the written assessments of English native speaker (ENS) students, some lecturers have voiced the opinion that home students seem to be less able to use the language accurately than international students in the highest level of English for Academic Purposes modules are. This paper compares 25 ENS students' papers and 25 international students' from the point of view of errors of grammar, lexis, spelling, punctuation and style. Findings show that whereas international students have most problems with vocabulary, ENS students' problems are mostly grammatical. The latter's grammatical errors are quite different from the former's. Their spelling and punctuation can be worse than that of international students. The causes and implications of these findings are



suggested and a solution is proposed.

**Charles Denroche**

University of Westminster

### **Academic Written Genres at the University of Westminster**

This paper will look at the genres of written text that students are required to produce at the University of Westminster. It will suggest that two important written genres are neglected in most EAP teaching - one, notes students write to their lecturers; the other, application forms (especially the 'further information' section) - and that the mastering of these genres can favourably affect a student's academic success. The paper will go on to argue that these particular texts are also distinctive in their function, in that they contain 'expressive' elements - other academic writing being 'informative' and/or 'persuasive' (according to Bühler's triangle of text functions). This paper will argue that although essay and report writing are quite rightly the main writing focus of most EAP courses, we must also be aware of the other genres students are required to produce, and if possible, find a place for these genres on the EAP syllabus.

**Fiona English**

SOAS, University of London

### **Running Before They Can Walk - How can we help international students resolve the mismatch between inadequate English language skills and the high linguistic demands of their degree programmes?**

Despite the best efforts of IELTS and TOEFL, many overseas students arrive on degree programmes with levels of English language competence that are to one degree or another inadequate to the task in hand - the handling of degree study materials and the production of degree study essays. Indeed, the equivalent student on a general English course would not even be approaching the kind of demands made on degree students in terms of both task complexity and study context. Added to this is the cultural conflict that must inevitably prevail when students from one academic culture enter a different one.

The most visible source of evidence of the struggle that these students are engaged in is the course essay, the 'product' of all that reading and all those

lectures, and it is on this that my paper will concentrate.

The present study proposes a framework for the analysis of student coursework essays in an attempt to identify what exactly is going on. The analysis focuses on the content and discourse organisation of the texts and aims to provide the beginnings of a 'language' in which to describe some of the problems with greater elucidation so that they will be more able to deal with the problems in their writing.

**Lynn Errey**  
Oxford Brookes University

### **"When the Decks are Stacked: What it takes to satisfy the requirements of University departments"**

A major consideration in the formative assessment of EAP writing tasks is the degree to which task design and feedback can assist NNS students in understanding what is required in their writing for subject specialist faculty. Although in theory our feedback aims to be "authentic" in helping NNS student writers to consider the needs and expectations of their academic readers, in practice it is difficult to be authoritative when relatively little is known about how university faculties react to the essays written for them by NNS students, especially those just beginning their experience in higher education. This paper is based on a study which set out to investigate what factors academic faculties would require for a "good enough" undergraduate essay in their field, and how they might react to various problems encountered in such an essay. For this action-research study, the reactions of five academic faculties were recorded whilst they assessed authentic first year undergraduate NNS essays in their own discipline areas. The paper will discuss the kinds of pre-writing strategies that readers in this study expected to be in place for successful task realisation, and which factors appeared most to influence the readers' overall assessments.

**Alan Evison**  
Queen Mary and Westfield College

### **"True Lies"**

It is a fundamental principle of the course that a substantial amount of practice of

the target skill is essential. Students' time is so heavily committed to their coursework that it is unrealistic to expect them to do much extra writing outside of class time. So nearly 50% of lesson time is devoted to essay writing; the rest of the time is spent on a specific teaching point, with awareness raising and more controlled practice activities.

The weekly timed essay is taken in and marked, and it is this regular practice with detailed feedback that is probably the most valuable part of the course. The approach used combines the use of error correction symbols, applied selectively, with an Essay Feedback Form which I staple to the front of the essay. This gives a skills profile in the form of a grid plus general comments and suggestions on key areas to improve on at the bottom. I find that far from adding to my marking load, it simplifies it. The student also find the criterion-referenced assessment helpful in highlighting areas of strength and weakness. An additional benefit for me as an assessor is that by keeping photocopies of each student's weekly Feedback Forms, my report-writing task at the end of term is greatly simplified.

**Tess Fitzpatrick**

University of Wales Swansea

### **Measuring Productive Vocabulary**

Most methods of assessing productive vocabulary require testees to produce huge amounts of written material. This paper describes a much simpler method which looks as though it might provide a very economical and rapid way of assessing productive vocabulary levels. The paper presents some new data using this methodology and discusses the relationship between the results of this assessment and measures of receptive vocabulary.

**Dr M.I. Freeman**

### **A New Self-Evaluation Instrument for the Measurement of Proficiency Levels (SSKILLS4)**

SSKILLS4 is a new self-evaluation instrument suitable for measuring proficiency levels of language students at university. It is a communicative measure of proficiency in all four skills, and was developed as part of the present author's doctoral research. The first part of the proposed presentation covers the

development of the instrument from Spolsky's (1989) can-do scales to its present form.

The second part gives some of the characteristics of the instrument, some quantitative data on the reliability and validity of the instrument, as well as the results of using the instrument on 118 learners of EFL and French at the universities of Sussex and Brighton.

The third part looks at the possibility of using such an instrument as the basis for national proficiency standards.

**Clare Furneaux**

University of Reading

### **Materials for promoting self-assessment in EAP speaking**

This paper will look at ways of promoting learner self- and peer- assessment in the two key EAP speaking skills of discussion and presentation. The focus will be on materials trialled on the University of Reading pre-session course, which have as one of their main aims the development of independence in learners. The materials attempt to extend learners' ability to assess strength and weaknesses in performance and to determine their own learning goals and strategies.

**Andy Gillett**

University of Hertfordshire

### **Using Writing Profile Forms for Assessing Writing on Validated Award-Bearing EAP Courses - WORKSHOP**

At the recent BALEAP PIMs meeting at Watford, several of the speakers and some of the participants mentioned problems they have with marking assignments. This is especially difficult when the English course is part of a degree course and the marks contribute to the student's final degree classification. The purpose of this workshop is to discuss using writing profile forms to assess such writing assignments.

The main emphasis will not be on the construction of such forms, but on the role

they can play in assessing writing on academic courses. There are many problems associated with using such a form and this is what I would like to discuss in the workshop. These problems need to be addressed formally when the course is part of a degree. Some of the problems are: what happens if students ignore the question? what happens if the students write too many words? how do we handle content? how important is accuracy? can you use one mark sheet to both help markers to be consistent and give feedback to students? etc.

In the workshop, I would like to present my marking scheme and the problems to the group and try to come up with some solutions.

**Katie Gray**  
Oxford University

### **Assessment in EAP: moving away from traditional models**

EAP courses need to reflect the fact that in mainstream Higher Education courses the student body is growing and diversifying, leading to changes in modes of delivery and assessment. This paper will identify the paradigm shift in assessment, and in particular the important focus on deep learning which has produced a multiplicity of different methods of assessment and different criteria for assessment and feedback. The usefulness and validity of alternatives to traditional approaches, from collaborative learning to working on e-mail, from peer correction to learning outcomes will be reviewed, and ways of negotiating such changes with tutors and students will be explored.

**Julie Hartill**  
University of Essex

### **Findings of an EAP Research Project**

The paper will report on the findings of a University-wide descriptive study, which focuses on teaching styles and assessment modes across the full range of disciplines. This project was undertaken to further inform both EFL Unit staff and colleagues in the University generally about the diverse requirements made of non-native speaker postgraduate students, with the aim of compiling a research base.

Having briefly considered the purpose of the project, and how data were gathered, the paper will then move on to discuss the implications of the research findings and the issues they flag up. For example, the project has enabled Unit staff to identify patterns of assignment within certain subject areas and consider the implications of these regarding English language classes and courses. The paper will also present examples of how this research base has been utilised in altering English language provision according to perceived need. For instance, the project has revealed that the majority of postgraduate students have to sit at least three formal written examinations during the course of the academic year.

Yet the exam preparation course, run in the second year as part of the in-session programme, has not always been well attended, despite an obvious need for practice in this area. This has led to the formulation of a new examination course which will run for the first time this year.

It is clear that a project of this nature has implications for both policy and practice. Our initial focus has been on practical applications of the information gathered. During the current academic year the Unit has moved on to examine the question of policy in more detail. I believe that both the project and its findings will be of relevance to a wider audience such as that of BALEAP.

**Lynne Hale and Paul Fanning**  
Middlesex University

### **University-Wide Screening with UCLES' Computer-Adaptive Test**

A description of how a computer-based test of general English was used as a means of diagnostically testing 1000 new non-native speaker undergraduates at the start of the 1995-96 and 1996-97 academic years. Central issues are the advantages and disadvantages of using this kind of computer-based testing, problems thrown up by computerised grading, and the value of using a test of general English to diagnose EAP needs.

**Donna Humphrey**  
Nottingham Trent University

### **Syllabus Design for Advanced Learners in an H.E setting**

The English Language module on the institution-wide language programme attracts undergraduate students from across the disciplines. These students bring with them a diversity of interests, discipline backgrounds, language learning experiences, languages needs and expectations. In an attempt to bridge these gaps the English language module has adopted a content-based approach to syllabus design. The course aims to provide a common academic core and at the same time offers students an interesting, motivating and challenging approach to language learning.

Three different prototype models of content-based instruction have been identified: theme-based, adjunct and sheltered approaches (Brinton, Snow and Wesche 1989: 14). The paper will focus on the rationale for adopting a theme-based approach to language instruction for undergraduate advanced learners. It will describe the techniques used both academically and culturally. The paper will provide an overview of the following key areas: course aims and objectives, the learning process, themes and topic areas, content material, learning objectives and assessment.

**Steve Issitt and Diane Houghton**  
University of Birmingham

### **Towards a Framework for the Assessment of Authentic EAP materials**

This paper seeks to establish a set of criteria for the assessment of authentic materials in EAP. It aims to provide a practical guide for teachers or practitioners particularly non-specialist teachers in the selection of texts and to encourage the use of such authentic texts.

An assessment schedule is presented which incorporates the criteria and includes a scoring system which it is suggested can be used to indicate the suitability of selected material.

We would hope to contribute to this area of material assessment by

(i) using a flexible scoring system which is accessible to non-subject specialist teachers and

(ii) by identifying relevant criteria which are of particular use in an effective EAP context.

A selection of texts will be examined and participants invited to apply the schedule to them. There will be opportunities to discuss the criteria themselves and suggestions will be very welcome.

The general subject focus will be economics and finance and one broad topic area will be Japan.

Pre-session courses will be emphasised but it is hoped that the schedule will be of relevance across the EAP spectrum in a variety of course and subject areas.

### **Julia Jeannet**

Richmond College, The American International University in London

### **Criteria for Evaluating Summary-Writing**

On the study skills component of a credit-bearing EAP Program, summary-writing is not only taught but also forms part of the assessment for the final course grade. This short presentation will briefly explain the reasons why performance on summary-writing is assessed; and it will describe the criteria applied in order to achieve parity of grading on tests in summary-writing taken twice a semester by up to 70 students.

### **Carys Jones**

King's College, London

### **"Explicit Assessment" for "Implicit Learning" in EAP**

The problems of overseas students in the EAP context are diverse and difficult to determine. Yet students and teachers often assume that, in most parts of the world, some mode of assessment is used to determine level and to provide a guide to the next step.

This paper will argue the case for developing and utilising assessment criteria to



encourage students' metacognitive thinking in the process of adapting to the complex academic culture of the target community. It will do this by exploring the linkage between assessment, learning and goals. Since the vast majority of students who attend EAP courses are not language students, the nature of consciousness in second language use will form part of the discussion. Reference will be made to a development study with Japanese science students.

**Bob R. Jordan**  
Manchester University

### **"Is The Customer Sometimes Right?" A consideration of students' views of assessment in EAP**

A questionnaire survey of more than 200 international students, predominantly postgraduate, attending Pre-Sessional EAP Courses at English universities, was conducted in the Summer of 1996. The purpose of the survey was to explore students' views of assessment in EAP - their experience, their preferred types of assessment, priorities, and the effect that assessment has upon them.

The students overwhelmingly agreed with the principle of assessment but differed as to the form it should take: the majority favoured a mixture of coursework and interviews. On the question of testing, nearly half the students only had experience of objective tests in English.

The most useful purpose of assessment for the students was to indicate their progress. They considered that writing, followed by speaking, were the most important areas to assess.

It is encouraging to note that a large proportion of the students have found that assessment has helped them to secure appropriate help and advice for their language development.

**G. Reza Kiany**

University of Essex / University of Teachers' Education, Iran

### **The Impact of Extraversion & Pedagogical Setting on Different Test Methods of EAP**

Trait psychologists hypothesise that the personality trait of *Extraversion* is a disadvantage for learning in general. In contrast, applied linguists tend to believe that Extraversion is a positive factor in learning a foreign/second language on the grounds that the high sociability of the more extravert language learners enhances interaction in the target language, hence entails better language proficiency. However, the impact of the *Pedagogical Setting* where language proficiency is developed and the *Test Method* i.e. the type of the tests measuring language proficiency are but two important, yet neglected factors in this regard. Such negligence often led to inconsistency and even contradiction in research findings. Following a pilot study, to examine the relation between Extraversion and English proficiency, 235 Iranian Ph.D students in three English speaking countries were involved in this study. The subjects comprised three subsamples of Non-English Majors, English Majors and an Immersion Group who differed, based on the type and amount of exposure to and instruction in English they already had. English proficiency was measured by an institutional test, TOEFL, IELTS, Cloze Test and an Oral Interview while the Persian adult form of the re-standardised Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) were administered to measure Extraversion. The results revealed that both *Pedagogical Setting* and *Test Method* are significant factors in the way in which *Extraversion* may effect *English proficiency*. The implications are discussed in relation to language learning and language testing.

**Julie King**

University of Durham

### **Listening to Lectures: Do lecturers modify their speech to accommodate their overseas students' listening needs?**

Despite the assertion that the lecture is 'a central ritual to the culture of learning' (Benson, 1994), most research has focused on academic writing and reading comprehension. Flowerdew (1994) comments that this trend is also apparent in research into the needs of the growing number of non-native speakers studying through English at the tertiary level.

This paper reports on a small scale research project which compares the assessment lecturers make of the listening needs of their overseas students on taught postgraduate courses with the way in which their lectures orientte to these needs. Data obtained from semi-structured interviews with lecturers show that they regard student needs as an important factor in determining their macro-level delivery style (Dudley-Evans and Johns, 1981) and lecture mode (Goffman, 1981). The data also confirm the move away from the traditional 'talk and chalk' to a more interactive style of lecturing (Benson, 1994; Mason, 1994).

The interview data strongly suggest that whilst lecturers are aware of a range of macro-level strategies for assisting lecture comprehension such as discourse organisation and linguistic signalling, they are not consciously aware of the micro-level means by which they orientate to the needs they assess in their students. Specifically, micro-level analysis of the lectures reveals a sophisticated means of indicating mode-switch and of clarifying and reforming items deemed necessary for student retention.

Finally, the paper identifies a range of implications for pre-sessional and in-sessional EAP course content, ideas for raising lecturer awareness in meeting assessed L2 academic listening needs and for further research into the effects of micro-level lecturer strategies on student learning.

**Mark Krzanowski**  
University College London

### **Assessment of Productive Skills on EAP Courses (WORKSHOP)**

The purpose of the workshop is to define and standardise the assessment criteria for:

1. essays and other written assignments
2. oral presentations

on EAP courses.

First, the author will present a comprehensive checklist that could be used to evaluate coursework essays and timed exam essays. Then the speaker will concentrate on how EAP students can be assisted in the process of writing their essays by being given ongoing feedback on their work. The second checklist

will be presented, the purpose of which is to 'assess students' successive drafts by using an inductive / guided discovery marking code.

Second, the presenter will attempt to establish the essential criteria to be used when assessing oral presentation. The participants will be provided with two presentation checklists and requested to compare them with the schemes / paradigms used in their academic institution.

Finally, two questions will be raised:

(a) is it at all possible (and necessary) to standardise assessment procedures of productive skills in EAP institutions throughout the UK?

(b) should reading, writing, listening and speaking carry equal marks in assessments (i.e. 25% each) or should productive skills be given more prominence (e.g. 30% for writing, 30% for speaking, 20% for reading and 20% for listening)?

**Gail Langley**

South Bank University

### **What's Different About English Units on Validated Courses?**

The paper aims to offer both a survey of the units being offered in English language in UK institutions of higher education by EAP / ESP staff and to compare this to other course types. The survey will be based on responses to a survey questionnaire and on the reports from the joint BALEAP / BASELT meeting on this subject (7 December 1996). Validated English language units are currently offered on all levels of course from Foundation to Postgraduate and in many different ways. To get a fuller understanding of what's going on nationwide is important as well as trying to define how this is developing or changing the work of BALEAP members.

**Philip Shaw and Philip Leeke**

University of Newcastle

### **Preparing to Assess Students' Vocabulary Acquisition Strategies**

Students need a mastery of the language of their subject as well as of broad-band

EAP, but in most cases BALEAP members cannot provide LSP courses. This is an example of a number of cases where the EAP course needs to teach - and hence assess - acquisition skills rather than performance skills or linguistic knowledge. The aim of this project was to establish a basis for assessing the effectiveness of acquisition skills in the area of vocabulary. We surveyed 160 research students about their vocabulary recording strategies. Only 60% said they kept some kind of record and more than half of those said they recorded mainly words rather than the kind of lexical phrases researchers have found to be useful in acquiring a professional register. We then followed the questionnaire up by interviewing students who said that they kept vocabulary records of some kind and examining their records. We found very various attitudes to what was recorded and how it was recorded, use of translation, etc., but there were indications of patterned variation according to stage and subject of study in the types of list made and their functions.

**Ann-Charlotte Lindeberg**

Swedish School of Economics and Business Administration

### **Peer Responses to Student Papers: How Effective a Tool?**

An important phase in the teaching method based on the writing process involves responding to drafts in pairs or small groups. One purpose of the group response is to train students to identify strengths and weaknesses in each other's writing and by transfer in their own writing. Another purpose is the opportunity for students to get feedback, not only from the instructor, but from several readers. The response sessions are usually greatly enjoyed by the students. Nevertheless, in course evaluations this component often gets the lowest grades, sometimes with the wry comment "It depends on who was in your group". Clearly, the effectiveness of response groups depends on how well students are trained to respond, how helpful the teacher's instructions to the group are. The aim of the present paper is to discuss some attempts at 'helpful instructions' and the resulting student responses. Rather than suggesting solutions, I would like to raise questions for general discussion, in the hope of enriching the repertoire of helpful instructions.

**Alan Lockett**  
University of Bristol

**Assessing Process and Product: making projects work on a pre-sessional EAP programme.**

The presentation looks at the design and implementation of academic project work, and its development and integration into a pre-sessional EAP programme at the Language Centre. In examining the rationale for this subject-specific project work, it is seen firstly as serving a valuable role as an individualised "self-directed" macro-task, allowing for the synthesis of a variety of sub-skills typically presented and practised in the classroom sessions. Aspects relating to the setting up, subsequent procedure, and monitoring of the project work are discussed, and a framework is presented illustrating how support for the process and product-based requirements of the task may be addressed by the EAP tutor. Secondly, consideration is given to its function as a means of integratively assessing the students' linguistic performance in the context, some of the problems and principles that have emerged surrounding the assessment of students through this means will be explored.

**Dr. Paul Meara**  
University of Wales Swansea

**PLEX: Assessing lexical competence in EAP**

This paper describes a new method of assessing productive lexical skills. Some recent work by Nation and Laufer has suggested that lexical knowledge can be measured by counting the proportion of infrequent words that occur in written production. Specifically, they suggested that a count of the number of words that are not included in the most frequent two thousand words of English might be a good index of lexical skills. The main problem with this measure is that these words do not occur frequently in texts anyway, so you need relatively large texts before you can start using the Beyond 2000 measure. A second problem is that the Beyond 2000 measure is not straightforward to interpret because it is not independent of the length of the text used to derive it.

This paper describes a new approach to measuring lexical richness in L2 productions which avoids both these problems. It can be used with relatively short texts, and seems to provide stable data across a wide range of text lengths.

Some practical uses of the new measure will be illustrated.

**Gill Meldrum**

University of Nottingham

### **I Know I Have To Be Critical, But How?**

A frequently stated requirement of university assignments is a critical approach to the literature, and a frequently stated complaint is that international students are not critical enough. EAP tutors have long been aware of the need to help students develop a critical approach to reading and writing.

Some of the issues have been discussed, for example by Richards and Skelton (1991), and means of developing a critical approach in EAP classes (particularly through Critical Language Awareness) have been put forward by Clark (1992), Ivanic and Simpson (1992) and by Allwright et al (1996).

In this paper, I hold that supplementary to developing their critical faculties in reading and writing, students are helped by awareness raising of and practice in adapting the **language and strategies** of criticism in academic journals. I approach the question of how criticism is carried out in journal articles with reference to Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, and examine polite (and impolite?) means of being both positively and negatively critical. I then consider how this can be used in EAP sessions. Although such language work, as an extension of developing an overall critical approach, may be particularly relevant to in-session students, it can also be incorporated into a pre-session programme.

**John Morley**

Manchester University

### **The Chaplen Test revisited: Can a multiple choice test in grammar and vocabulary serve as a useful indicator of a student's proficiency in written English?**

The paper reports on a study which sets out to examine the strength and nature of the relationship between students' scores on the multiple choice Chaplen Test (1970), and their proficiency in written academic English indicated by IELTS

band descriptors. Although the study found a positive correlation between the two methods of assessment, the scatterplot showed that there was considerable dispersion of the Chaplen scores around each of the IELTS bands. Nevertheless, approximate estimates of the IELTS bands based on known Chaplen scores were obtained, and in a number of cases, these became more meaningful when students' nationalities were taken into account. The paper goes on to argue that system referenced tests like the Chaplen can still play a useful role in identifying students with weak language proficiency.

**Hilary Nesi and Benita Studman**

University of Warwick

### **Open all hours: Strengths and Weaknesses of a reading skills course on the Internet**

There is growing interest in the use of the Internet for EAP. Its use so far has mainly been as a way of providing self-access materials for writing (for example, the Purdue University Online Writing Laboratory), but in 1996 we developed at the University of Warwick a course accessible via the World Wide Web with a primary focus on the development of reading skills. The course is divided into 6 sections: effective reading, predicting information, determining author's opinion, note-making and summary writing, abstracts, compiling a bibliography and editing and correcting mistakes.

This paper analyses students' interactions with the course materials during the pre-sessional and in-sessional programmes and in the first term of the academic year 1996-97. Three methods were used to evaluate the different sections of the course: access statistics, a questionnaire and interviews with a selected sample of participants.

Initial findings suggest that the section on abstract was the most heavily accessed and reasons for this are discussed.



**Anne Pallant**  
University of Reading

**Efficient Summarising of Academic Texts is an Essential Skill for Successful Assignment Writing and Examination Performance: What Overseas Students find difficult and Steps they can take to overcome these difficulties. (POSTER PRESENTATION)**

Most university students find summarizing a difficult skill, even more so overseas students. It is an essential skill for the achievement of academic success and an effective factor in university assessment and is therefore a key in any EAP course. This presentation will look at why it is such an important skill and the difficulties overseas students have. It will review previous literature on training students and published material, and then examine further steps that need to be taken to ensure competence in this area.

**Jonathan Payne**  
Goldsmiths College, University of London

**Assessing the Listening Task and Assessing the Listener**

This presentation reports on an ongoing investigation into lectures given at the College, with a view to establishing criteria against which the lecture listening ability of international students can be assessed and hence priorities established in developing such abilities.

The particular range of subjects taught at the College means that the usual assumptions that may be made about the form, content and delivery of academic lectures, and hence about the skills required for academic listening, implicit in much published material require re-examination.

This is likely to have implications both for the way in which we assess our students and the way in which we design our courses.

**Pauline Robinson**  
University of Reading

### **English language entry levels and what happens next:-**

**Alan Tonkyn: Overview of English language entry requirements in UK universities**

A report on the BALEAP research on English language entry requirements in BALEAP member universities.

**Rita Green and Andy Seymour: Life after the pre-sessional course: How students fare in their departments**

A report on research at one university - Reading - into the accuracy and effectiveness of the end of pre-sessional course reports on students' language levels. Records were kept of students' English language levels on entry to Reading and on entry to their departments. Students who needed further English language help after the pre-sessional course, despite being recorded as "able to cope", were studied in depth, and their work matched with the requirements of the departments. Finally, records were obtained of students' achievements in their masters' level courses.

**Ros Richards, Pauline Robinson et al.: The way forward: Coordinated research into the assessment of appropriate English language levels**

Building on the previous two papers and on points which have come up during the conference, this directed discussion will attempt to pinpoint the questions we need to ask and the procedures we need to follow in order to get a clearer national picture of what departments require in terms of students' English language levels. Much of the research to date, while valuable, has been limited to just one university at a time. We suggest that BALEAP needs to put forward a procedure and set up a research agenda to get a more national picture.

**Teresa Thiel**

Moray House Institute of Education, Edinburgh

### **Developing Communicative Confidence**

International students frequently embark on their studies overseas with high expectations and a record of previous academic success. However, they may soon perceive themselves to be at a disadvantage linguistically when taking part in seminars or when giving oral presentations for academic courses. In addition, cultural background, previous learning experiences and years away from formal education can contribute to a lack of confidence in classroom communication.

The presenter will outline a one semester module in Language Development which aims to assess and improve international students' oral presentation and writing skills for academic purposes. The course is provided for Malaysian in-service teachers on a BEd TESOL programme at Moray House Institute of Education. First, what strategies can be used to overcome perceived barriers to effective oral communication? Second, in what ways can written texts developed from oral presentations be used as a diagnostic tool? Finally, how can a collaborative approach to language development contribute to international students' self-confidence?

**Magdalen Ward Goodbody**

University of Bath

### **Using a report-writing exercise as a means of obtaining student feedback on a course**

The use of a questionnaire is a time-honoured method of eliciting feedback from students on any course. Pre-sessional courses are no exception, and some carefully researched and useful questionnaires have been produced in this area. However, questionnaires for eliciting feedback have certain limitations.

This year, in order to try another means of eliciting feedback *and* to give our pre-sessional students the opportunity to write an authentic report, we asked the students to prepare and write a report on the course as a classroom activity. This paper describes the method used to set up the task and the results obtained. It evaluates both the perceived advantages of this method of gathering feedback over the questionnaire and also the task as a report-writing exercise, and asks

whether such a task can realistically serve a double purpose.

**Tilly Warren**

University of Birmingham

### **The CALLCO Grammar Project**

For many years Tim Johns of the English for International Students Unit at Birmingham University has run a course of lectures called "Remedial Grammar". At the start of the academic year around 200 students attend these twice-weekly lectures and the handouts are ever in popular demand. The originality of the "Remedial Grammar" lecture materials is that they require students to study English from concordance lines (citations from actual usage) and guide them to make their own rules about English grammar.

Last year the CALLCO Grammar Project was set up to make the handouts into self-access computer exercises for those international students who could not make the lectures or who wanted extra practice. Essentially the computer materials strive to continue the "data driven learning" approach, while giving more support in the form of text animation, background information (eg. vocabulary definitions) and various types of practice exercise as facilitated by Toolbook templates written for the purpose by Trevor Batchelor of Birmingham University Information Services. This presentation will demonstrate the computer materials and discuss how the transition from handout to software was made.

**Lynda Wilks and Irene Turner**

University of Wales Swansea

### **"It's Testing, Jim, But Not As We Know It" - An Introduction to the Eurocentres Vocabulary Size Test (EVST)**

Research has suggested that vocabulary size can be linked to overall proficiency in a language.

It was in an effort to produce a tool which could calculate approximate vocabulary size quickly, without the need for tutor time to be spent in marking, that the computer-based EVST was developed.

This session will include a brief history of the evolution of EVST, an introduction to its structure, discussion of its validity, and suggestions for its applications and future development.

At the end of the session there will be an opportunity for participants to try the test on themselves, and on student volunteers.

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