

Conference Report

BALEAP 2015: EAP in a Rapidly Changing Landscape: Issues, Challenges and Solutions - University of Leicester - 17–19 April 2015

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This review briefly reports on one aspect of the BALEAP Pre-Conference Event B on tackling plagiarism in academic writing in EAP courses – principled approaches to pedagogy and assessment for writing sources, which was introduced by Diane Schmitt and kicked off around 9:30am on Friday 17th April until 12:30. It also reports back about an exceptional and very inspiring workshop that ran on the Friday namely *Current Texts in EAP: A Framework for Lesson Design* by Cath Brown and Erin Revell, The University of Sheffield. However, firstly it provides a brief overview of the BALEAP 2015 biennial conference 17-19 April hosted in the very modern Gilbert Murray Conference Centre and John Foster Hall by University of Leicester, and organised by the Conference Committee formed by the English Language Teaching Unit (ELTU) staff and led by the department director, Phil Horspool.

Essentially, the main conference proved to be very popular with over 300 delegates taking the time and effort to travel in from an array of countries around the world. It was organised to target the key issues and challenges that are currently trending in the context of EAP described as ‘a rapidly changing landscape’ and officially opened at 1:45pm by the President and Vice Chancellor of the University, Professor Paul Boyle on Friday 17th.

The schedule included an expert-led trio of plenaries over the course of the weekend including Dr Catherine Walter, Lecturer of Applied Linguistics at the University of Oxford, on *Listening and reading in L2 academic contexts: what we know now, and what can we do about it?* on Saturday 18th and the closing plenary on Sunday 19th by Professor Ken Hyland, Director of the Centre for Applied English Studies at the University of Hong Kong on *Innovating instruction: specificity and English in the disciplines*. Unfortunately, I was only able to attend the opening plenary on Friday 17th by Professor Rebecca Hughes, Director-Education for the British Council on *Navigation in a complex world: English as a compass or a map?* The plenary posed questions particularly what is the role of the EAP practitioner and HE institutions in the UK when supporting increasingly diverse EAP students with higher levels of language proficiency and study and essentially more complex needs? I found this to be extremely thought-provoking, relevant and offered much scope for contemplation as I continue forward in my work as an EAP tutor in higher education.

Prior to the main conference, there were two pre-conference events one of which was on Doctoral Research in EAP. This was set up to address isolation as a result of doing doctoral study accentuated by the fact that ‘bespoke academic departments brimming with EAP expertise’ do not exist to support those in this line of post-graduate study. According to the programme, this took an informal, participant-led approach as a means for providing a shared setting for debate and discussion relating to aspects of candidate research. In the meantime, I attended the pre-conference on tackling plagiarism in academic writing in EAP courses aimed to revisit the teaching and assessment of source-based writing on pre-sessional

courses. The session was divided into four talks in ascending order - Diane Pecorari on Applying principles of good source use to pedagogic tasks, Diane Schmitt on Assessment of source-based writing – Avoiding penalty, Erik Borg on Purposeful use of citations and references and Mary Davis on Writing with sources: what can be copied. Round-table discussions were integrated into the sessions, which helped clarify some of the points that were made.

In particular, I found elements of Diane Schmitt, University of Nottingham talk about avoiding plagiarism valuable and transferable to my own practice. Diane spoke about a ‘decontextualized’ approach to teaching paraphrasing that is often applied on pre-sessional courses. The example she used to illustrate this point resembled steps that I have trained my students to use in the past as an approach to teaching paraphrasing to avoid plagiarism including changing the sentence structure, changing parts of speech and word forms and using synonyms. She explained that this approach takes the text out of context which is not an effective approach to developing students’ knowledge and skills which enable them to write in ways deemed acceptable by our universities. As an alternative to teaching the steps to de-contextualisation, Diane spoke about a ‘component approach’ to teaching paraphrasing which amongst other things involved setting regular homework, giving timely feedback and providing regular practice.

As well as pre-conferences, plenaries, talks, poster presentations, symposia, and Pechakucha, there were workshops. I managed to attend one workshop as a delegate over the course of the weekend, and I wasn’t disappointed. The workshop by Cath Brown and Erin Revell on *Current Texts in EAP: A Framework for Lesson Design* was structured around what I thought to be a cleverly cultivated and usable framework for lesson design which they had called S. L. I. C. E. Each letter is representative of 1 stage, in a 5 stage lesson plan, which is intended to be purposeful and beneficial in its own individual way.

S for Socialise, L for Link, I for Input, C for Communication Skills, and E for Extend.

What I liked about Cath Brown and Erin Revell’s workshop was it felt like a workshop, and what I mean by this is the delegates did stuff; we got involved and were part of a shared learning experience for the duration of the energetic, motivating and stimulating 1 hour workshop that began at 4pm on Friday 17th.

S.L.I.C.E Purpose and Benefit

- The Socialise section operates as a warmer, ideally a mingle activity that helps pre-teach vocabulary, encourage peer-teaching and learning, activate schemata, introduce key ideas in a text and stimulate interest in a topic.
- The Link section simply links the key ideas introduced in the socialise task with the Input section. Link activities require students to generate opinion, personalise key ideas, and work in small groups such as Do you agree or disagree with...? type questions.
- The benefit of the Input stage is it allows students to interact with the text, take ownership and promote understanding. This is based on a reading lesson demonstrated in this workshop.
- The Communication stage allows the text to be used as a springboard for further, more in-depth communication skill development such as discussion skills or summarising. Activities in this section might look like an academic discussion, problem-solving task, debate or a short presentation.

- The purpose of the Extend component facilitate individual learning, which not only varies interaction patterns, lends itself to the promotion of critical thinking skills and learner training in terms of encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning. Activities in this section might promote further personalisation and consolidate learning.

The mingle activity that was used to demonstrate the purpose of the ‘socialise’ component of the framework was Find someone who... By following the instructions on the worksheet, the delegates inadvertently became immersed in short discussions that required us to think carefully about our own practice as teachers in relation to speaking e.g. we had to find someone who was able to explain what makes a ‘good’ speaking activity and record their name and comment. There was a lot of buzz in the room as the delegates followed the instructions and mingled. Once we had completed this task, Cath and Erin engaged us in whole group feedback, and it became apparent why we had been engaged in this activity. It proved to be a stealthy yet successful approach towards activating our schemata, stimulating our interest and introducing us to key ideas, which indirectly demonstrated the purpose of the Socialise activity.

The presenters continued to take us through each section of this framework with creative and innovative approaches to aid our understanding of the purpose of each component as well as the purpose of the framework overall. Essentially using this framework successfully seemed to be a matter of selection in terms of choosing the right type of task or activity that would facilitate the learning outcomes intended at each stage. What seemed to be a downside in terms of practical application of this framework was the time required to deliver all 5 stages. If memory serves, it was explained that during its development, it had run over a 3 hour period, which is not standard practice in my department. However there seemed to be room for adaptation and perhaps the framework could be carried over two lessons. I’d be interested in finding out.

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