Introduction

Materials development is a very practical theme for a BALEAP conference. This is partly a consequence of the fact that this conference was a joint venture with the Scottish Association for the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (SATEFL) so there was a need for a theme with a broad appeal to a diverse audience. However, when BALEAP was established in 1972 as the Special English Language Materials for Overseas University Students Group, materials were ‘the prime need’ (Jordan 2002:71) and at the meeting in 1989 to change the name of the organisation to BALEAP there was ‘general agreement over the continuing importance of materials-sharing to the organisation’.¹ Seventeen years later, faced with a much more diverse student population but with a great deal more understanding of their specific needs from research into genre and corpus linguistics, it seemed important to encourage the EAP community to come together specifically to share good practice in the development of new approaches to learning and teaching materials and to focus on how this good practice is underpinned by insights from research.

Materials development in EAP has come a long way since Hutchinson and Waters (1987:125) concluded their chapter on materials design by recommending it as ‘the last resort, when all other possibilities of providing materials have been exhausted’. McGrath (2002:1) lists several book-length publications which attest to the ‘acceptance of the appropriateness of materials as a field of serious study’ and his own book and those edited by Tomlinson (1998, 2003) contribute to a lively research field. ‘Materials’ has tended to mean published materials such as coursebooks and their associated multimedia so that materials development was largely concerned with

¹ Paul Fanning, personal communication, August 2006.
evaluation and adaptation. However, the past ten years has seen the increasing availability of electronic sources for materials development, ranging from a variety of genres on the Internet, through research papers and course materials held on local area networks, to corpora collected for specific research purposes. Materials development now includes analysis of these sources and creation of new learning tasks based on this analysis.

The EAP research community has also gained much more specific knowledge about what is involved in studying in further and higher education. Genre analysis and corpus linguistics have contributed enormously to our understanding of the types of texts and the kind of language that students will be required to deal with. Research into reading, writing, listening and speaking in academic settings has informed recent publications such as the University of Reading English for Academic Study series published by Garnet Education and the new editions of Study Reading/Writing/Listening/Speaking/Tasks from Edinburgh, published by Cambridge University Press. Nevertheless, Harwood (2005) found that many of the EAP textbooks he surveyed did not reflect current research in applied linguistics. The gap between research or theory and practice has been discussed by Block (2000), and Tomlinson (1998:23) notes that many papers end by suggesting their research has implications for classroom practice without ever providing specific applications for this. While some developers make their materials freely available via websites e.g. Andy Gillett, Sandra Haywood and John Morley, a great deal of good material based on sound research remains within the institution where it was created.

Jolly and Bolitho (1998:111) note the importance of materials writing for teachers’ professional development, ‘raising almost every issue which is important in learning to teach’ and McGrath (2002:5) suggests that teachers

2 [http://www.uefap.com]
3 [http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/~alzsh3/acvocab/]
4 [http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/]
need to possess the confidence and at least basic competences to (1) make informed decisions about the choice and use of materials and (2) develop materials when existing materials are found to be inadequate.

This conference with its practical theme was one way to enable researchers, teachers, writers and publishers to come together ‘to pool resources and to take advantage of different areas of expertise’ in materials design (Tomlinson 1998:343).

The 26 papers in this volume highlight most of the current issues confronting EAP practitioners. A number of underlying key themes run through the collection: the increasing diversity of the student population, socialisation of these students within their specific fields of study, genre analysis and corpus studies to understand these fields and design targeted teaching materials, the importance of critical thinking and academic literacy for learner autonomy, and writing as a key academic skill.

Section I concerns academic socialisation and needs analysis. Sandra Cardew uses the concept of citizenship tests to encourage students to think critically about their place within their academic discourse community. Erik Borg notes the contribution of genre analysis to the teaching of writing but shows the difficulties of applying those insights to emerging genres in fields such as Fine Arts and Design. Hania Salter-Dvorak argues for pragmatic training of students to enable them to be more than ‘academic tourists’ in their learning communities. Robert Berman uses a grounded theory approach to develop a questionnaire designed to establish the factors contributing to L2 undergraduates’ academic success and Diana Ridley presents a needs analysis which investigated supervisor and research student views on the desirability and content of online thesis writing guidelines.

Section II covers curriculum and course design. Paul Fanning argues for the viability of EFL at undergraduate level, and shows how advanced language teaching materials can be adapted to meet the very particular needs of undergraduate education. Richard Bailey and Peter Sercombe present an alternative approach to course design in EAP which is holistically devised and content focused in order to address academic literacy requirements of international students. Ian Bruce
addresses the diversity of approaches to genre classification and considers the genre constructs which might be used to design academic writing courses. John Wrigglesworth shows how genre-based pedagogy was used in the design and delivery of an English language support unit accompanying undergraduate and postgraduate degrees.

Section III focuses on modes of delivery. David Catterick explores the development of a conceptual tool which provides a frame of reference for the delivery and evaluation of individual academic coaching. Ann Smith shows how case-based teaching, now popular in many academic disciplines, can be used in an EAP context to develop learners’ critical awareness, discussion skills and co-operative teamwork. Alison Stewart describes an academic writing course which used the concept of a community of practice to encourage a greater sense of mutual accountability for a writing assignment. Fred Tarttelin shows how students can be motivated to commit to substantial out-of-class extensive reading if the work contributes to other tasks and activities that are part of the assessment programme.

Section IV considers the possibilities for both teachers and students of finding and using sources in academic writing. Martin Millar addresses the issue of sourcing and selecting suitable materials for teaching by reflecting on past, present and future practice. Joan McCormack describes materials developed to provide a more integrated approach to the teaching of extended writing in the academic context. Lynn Errey evaluates the use of online discussion in an academic writing module to help students avoid plagiarism by seeing citation as embedded in academic writing culture. Cathy Benson, Jacqueline Gollin and Hugh Trappes-Lomax investigate reporting strategies in academic writing, using a corpus of academic texts, and offer practical suggestions for teaching and materials writing.

Section V concerns assessment. Siân Etherington investigated academic tutors’ and students’ understanding of and priorities within academic writing in order to both align pre-sessional testing more closely with authentic writing needs and to explore the development of student thinking about this area. John Slaght and Bruce Howell describe how the design of the University of Reading Test of English for Educational Purposes has evolved to fit in with pre-sessional course design principles and ensure that assessment complements the
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course rather than drives it. Andy Blackhurst demonstrates the comparability of IELTS tests delivered on paper and by computer.

Section VI covers online and blended learning. Paul Wickens argues that computer literacy needs to be brought fully into the academic literacy objectives of EAP and shows how traditional IT self-study training materials can be integrated into a situated task based framework. Bob Gilmour highlights some of the issues to consider in the design and development of an effective, online self-study site for English language materials within a Higher Education Institution. Lynne Hale and Gillian Lazar describe the conflicts and opportunities arising from a highly collaborative materials writing project to develop online academic writing materials. Fei-Yu Chuang and Hilary Nesi discuss the development of GrammarTalk, a set of interactive grammar materials designed to help Chinese EAP students improve their formal accuracy. Stella Harvey and Karen Nicholls describe the development and evaluation of two sets of online materials which build on the language, content, and context of the live lecture. Ian McGrath discusses the relationship between textbooks, technology and teachers, and in particular the impact of technology on teaching and learning.

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October 2006

Bibliography