

BALEAP NEWSLETTER, No. 4 October 2003

BALEAP conferences and Business meetings

As all those who participated will agree, our 2003 conference back in April at the University of Southampton was a great success, both intellectually and socially- our thanks to George Blue and his team for this event. The wheels are already in motion for our 2005 conference and details will be posted on our website in due course. There is still time for BALEAP institutions to put themselves forward to host the 2005 Conference. Please contact Jeanne Godfrey by email for further details.

Our next BALEAP business meeting is on November 14th at the University of Reading. Details of this meeting will be sent via email to BALEAP institutions shortly.

Nominations for BALEAP Treasurer.

Institutional members will have received details of this post and a request for nominations. The treasurer is of course a vital part of any subscription based organisation, so please think about putting yourself forward for nomination!

Professional Interest Meetings (PIMs)

The next meeting is on November 15th at the University of Reading, on uses of corpora in EAP. You should already have received registration details via email from the new PIM co-ordinator, Andy Seymour. The full list of forthcoming PIMs can be found on our website. Topics for future events include computer supported learning, and intercultural communication.

BALEAP Membership and the BALEAP Accreditation Scheme (BAS).

Our membership, both institutional and individual continues to grow and our updated Accreditation Scheme Handbook is now available from our website and our BASC Secretary. Several institutions have now been inspected under the 'fast track' BALEAP accreditation scheme for institutions already accredited by EiBAS, and BALEAP continues to work with English in Britain on reciprocal accreditation schemes.

Journal of English for Academic Purposes.

The journal has proved hugely successful and has a worldwide subscription base. As you will know, joining BALEAP entitles you to free subscription to the journal – details from the BALEAP website or from the Elsevier website at www.elseviersocialsciences.com/locate/jeap Elsevier now has a service called 'Content Direct' which gives free downloads of journal contents and article abstracts.

Current concerns and issues among BALEAP members.

I have written a short article for the next issue of the of the EL Gazette, summarising some of the main current issues concerning BALEAP members, and I thought I would include the text here for you in this newsletter, so here it is.

'The key roles of BALEAP as an organisation are threefold: to support professional development for EAP practitioners: to help develop UK EAP provision in higher education (mainly via the BALEAP accreditation scheme); to promote and disseminate EAP and EAP associated research through conferences, the Journal of EAP and other publications.

The BALEAP membership is diverse and inevitably (and healthily) encompasses a wide range of views on current EAP issues. One particular area of interest and concern to our members is of course the English Language proficiency tests which are used by universities to admit international students onto degree courses in the UK. BALEAP members increasingly feel that more research needs to be done on the amount English language tuition needed to 'move students up' the IELTS scoring system. In addition, we are continuing to look at the issue of over emphasis by institutions on language proficiency measures and their equivalencies, rather than how well a student is prepared for their desired course of study (these topics were the focus of a 2000 BALEAP PIM). We therefore also need to conduct more research on the efficacy of different types of pre-session course practice and pre-session exit assessments in preparing students for degree level work. There still also needs to be more communication about admission criteria between EAP staff and admissions tutors and to this end, BALEAP has recently updated its booklet 'Guidelines on English Language Proficiency Levels for International Applicants to UK Universities' which is available to all BALEAP institutions.

Political decisions by the government, such as the decision to increase the cost of visa extensions for international students has caused some concern to BALEAP members, as it is feared that such a change may discourage less well-off students from applying for study in the UK. The price increase would also seem to contradict the government's aim of increasing international student numbers in higher education. The increase in the number of international students studying at our universities brings us to another main area of discussion among EAP practitioners, that is the amount of resource institutions allocate to supporting our international students. Gaining BALEAP accreditation can be a powerful mechanism for helping EAP staff lobby their institution for increased resources, particularly as academic departments now take the comments of external examiners concerning the English language competencies of overseas (and indeed all students) extremely seriously.

Another important area of debate in BALEAP is the merging of FE and HE provision, and the implications this has for the teaching of EAP, particularly at foundation level, and this was the focus of a BALEAP PIM in 2002. 'Integration' has always been of interest to BALEAP members, in terms of pedagogy, research and course delivery. The 2003 BALEAP conference for example, had the inclusive title 'Academic Literacy', and the conference purposely aimed to widen the EAP debate and address the academic English needs of all students, including dyslexic students, native speakers of English and students with English as an additional language.

Finally and fundamentally, in an increasingly globalised world and higher education system, the principle of using 'native speaker' competence as a benchmark for academic work and study is being increasingly called into question, and the use of research resources such as corpora are an essential tool in looking at the reality of current communication in the academic world rather than working to an older ideology.'

A New BALEAP Chair

This is my last BALEAP newsletter, as Andy Gillett from the University of Hertfordshire takes over as BALEAP chair from the next meeting in November. Needless to say my two-year term seems to have flown by and I am pleased to say

that it has been both stimulating and enjoyable; I would like to end this newsletter with a sincere 'thank you' to all BALEAP members and particularly to the BALEAP executive for this.

Jeanne Godfrey, Chair BALEAP.