

BALEAP Bulletin

Andy Gillett, Chair of the British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes

Between the end of March (when I am writing this bulletin) and June (when you are reading this bulletin) we will have had a BALEAP Executive meeting, a BALEAP Business meeting and the BALEAP Biennial Conference at Heriot Watt University in Edinburgh. In my next bulletin, I will give you details of the decisions that were made at the meetings and a report on the conference.

Meanwhile, I can say that I am looking forward to what looks like an excellent conference at Heriot Watt. The theme is “New Approaches to Materials Development for Language Learning”. This is a topic that has not been addressed at a BALEAP conference recently but has always been central to BALEAP’s activities. In fact, as most of you will know, before becoming BALEAP, our organisation was SELMOUS – Special English Language Materials for Overseas University Students. SELMOUS was started in 1972 as there was seen to be a need for such an organisation. As Bob Jordan points out in the first issue of JEAP (*Journal of English for Academic Purposes*), several universities were running similar pre-sessional courses and felt the need to “share materials”. So one of the original purposes of SELMOUS was for members to “prepare a list of their personal teaching materials ... and send them ... for circulation to all members”. So sharing EAP teaching materials is something BALEAP has always done. The conference should continue this tradition.

The kinds of materials we need and use depend very much on our students. For many people, teaching EAP is IELTS preparation and they use many of the excellent IELTS preparation materials which are now available. However, I do not think that this is typical of most BALEAP members. Fundamental to BALEAP’s approach to EAP materials is finding out who our students are and what they need. And increasingly we are finding that there are big variations between different departments and subjects in a university. Our materials need to reflect these differences.

This is one reason why a book like Ken Hyland’s *Disciplinary Discourses* (Longman, 2000) is so important for BALEAP members. In the book Hyland explores the social interactions between writers and readers within different academic discourse communities, concentrating on the relationships between the cultures of academic communities and their unique discourses. He reports on a series of studies in Molecular Biology, Magnetic Physics, Mechanical Engineering, Electronic Engineering, Philosophy, Sociology, Marketing, and Applied Linguistics, looking at academic genres such as research articles, book reviews, abstracts, scientific letters and textbooks and pointing out the similarities and differences in aspects of academic writing such as citation practices, praise/criticism and rhetorical moves. Based on these studies, Hyland provides practical teaching suggestions and points out opportunities for further research within the subject area. Hyland’s and others’ work in similar areas will continue to inform researchers and materials designers in choosing the most appropriate materials to help their students.

The importance of remembering our students’ needs is particularly relevant for our in-sessional courses. Like most universities, at the University of Hertfordshire, we work closely with subject lecturers to ensure that we teach their students what they need, something again that BALEAP members can share. This is something that will be followed up at the next BALEAP Professional Issues Meeting (PIM). The theme will be “In-sessional Provision: Issues and Practices” and it will be held at the University of Exeter on Saturday 12th November. Colleagues who wish to give papers or poster presentations or run workshops are invited to submit proposals by 7 July 2005.

Contact

As always, see the web-site www.baleap.org.uk for further information on PIMS or BALEAP in general.