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Plenary Speeches

Academic literacy across the curriculum: Towards a collaborative instructional approach

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I respond to the conference theme 'English across the Curriculum' by suggesting that 'Academic literacy' should be taught across the curriculum. I first explain the concept of academic literacy, which describes the range of abilities that students have to acquire when starting out in a new academic discipline. I then discuss the dominant instructional provision at universities. As this provision fails to address students' real learning needs, I argue for curriculum-integrated academic literacy instruction that is based on the collaboration between English for academic purposes (EAP) specialists and subject lecturers. I provide examples of collaborative, discipline-specific approaches to supporting student learning, and present some insights from an intervention study that I have carried out to explore feasible ways of teaching and collaboration. Finally, I discuss the need for lecturer training to achieve a curriculum-integrated approach, and report on my experience of running a professional development module which aimed to enable lecturers to embed academic literacy development into their teaching practice.

1. Introduction

The title of my paper responds to the conference theme 'English across the Curriculum', which itself relates to the movement 'Writing across the Curriculum', an influential approach to teaching writing within the disciplines which is widely followed in US universities (Horner 2014). My title signals two points I want to make: first, that we need to do more than just teach WRITING if we want to offer adequate support to students settling into university, and second, that ENGLISH, as in the label 'English Across the Curriculum' needs to be understood in such a way as to avoid the rather common misconception that it is linguistic competence only that students need for successful academic study. 'Academic literacy' represents more clearly the range of abilities that students have to acquire when starting out in a new academic discipline. The recognition that successful performance at university requires the development of academic literacy is particularly important in second language (L2) environments such as

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Hong Kong, where difficulties that students encounter at university tend to be attributed to a lack of competence in English.

Therefore, in the first part of my paper, I aim to explain the concept of academic literacy and discuss the dominant instructional provision at universities. As this provision fails to address students' real learning needs, I will argue for curriculum-integrated academic literacy instruction that is based on the collaboration between EAP specialists and subject lecturers. Next, I will provide examples of collaborative, discipline-specific approaches to supporting student learning, and present some insights from a writing intervention study that I have carried out to explore feasible ways of teaching and collaboration. Finally, I discuss the need for subject lecturer training to achieve a curriculum-integrated approach, and report on my experience of running a professional development module which aimed to enable lecturers to embed academic literacy development into their teaching practice.

2. Academic literacy and dominant instructional models

'Academic literacy' is far more than academic writing, although the term is often used with reference to writing only. I understand academic literacy as the ability to communicate competently in an academic discourse community; this encompasses reading, evaluating information, as well as presenting, debating and creating knowledge through both speaking and writing. These capabilities require knowledge of the community's epistemology, of the genres through which the community interacts, and of the conventions that regulate these interactions. This understanding of academic literacy has two main implications. First, academic literacy has to be acquired by ALL students, native speakers of English or not, new to an academic context, and second, it cannot be acquired outside the discourse community. This means that instruction and support need to be offered to all students by expert members of the discourse community, who 'play a very important role in socialising novices and implicitly or explicitly teaching them to think, feel, and act in accordance with the values, ideologies, and traditions of the group' (Duff 2007: 311). In reality, however, support is usually only available for specific student groups and is provided outside the disciplines in language or learning development centres. The capabilities that form academic literacy are rarely explicitly addressed at university, neither in extra-curricular courses, nor within the disciplines. Although most students are likely to acquire these capabilities eventually, the process could be much accelerated and made easier if explicit support was given within the discourse community, or more specifically, within the curriculum. However, widespread misconceptions of students' learning needs and a lack of awareness of what academic literacy entails prevent the provision of adequate support.

The difficulties that students experience at the level of academic literacy are usually detected in their written assignments and commonly confused with language problems. For instance, Lea & Street (1998) found that lecturers were often unable to pinpoint the underlying literacy problems in essays, and therefore attributed weak performance to surface features such as structure, grammar or spelling. This confusion between language and literacy, and the related lack of understanding of students' learning needs, lead to further misconceptions.

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One is that it is mainly non-native speakers of English who need support, and another is that the students are to blame for what is perceived as their linguistic deficiencies. This is apparent in frequent media reports lamenting that students 'can't even write in sentences' (Nuffield Review 2006) or that there is '[A] sad loss of literacy down under' (Dann 2008). Obviously, academic literacy – or the widespread understanding of it as correct language or writing ability – is seen as something that students should bring with them when they enter university.

The instructional provision at most Anglophone universities is based on these misconceptions, and follows a 'technicist' (Turner 2011: 3) and remedial model. One or other of two main types of instruction provision are usually offered. The first is EAP classes, which tend to be offered exclusively to L2 students, often to give them the opportunity to make up for an insufficient score on the English language entry test. The second is through the provision of learning development courses, often called 'Study skills', which cover topics such as time management, exam preparation and academic writing and are usually available to all students. This provision has some serious shortcomings. One shortcoming is that a (non-existent) universal academic English is taught to students from a range of disciplines, with a focus on linguistic features such as grammar, structure and style. While this generic approach may offer novice students some insights into the 'common core' (Bloor & Bloor 1986) of grammatical and lexical features of academic language, it does not prepare students for communication in their disciplines. Another shortcoming is that the responsibility for academic literacy instruction is wrongly allocated. In the current system, subject lecturers, who are experts in the community's discourses and communication, are not obliged to engage with students' academic literacy development. Although many lecturers may do this to some extent, and I assume rather implicitly, there is no systematic and consistent support. By contrast, academics tend to reject engagement with what they perceive as student's language problems, either because they believe that students should learn 'writing' before they come to university, or because they have themselves only a 'tacit' knowledge of their discipline's discourse conventions (Jacobs 2005: 447). Some of these attitudes emerged in a recent study of lecturers' perceptions of teaching international students. The following interview extract shows the trend to attribute students' problems to language deficiencies:

> I am a Law lecturer … I am quite happy to help as far as I can … but you know I am not an English support teacher. I'm not trained to help people who really need specific targeted support nor are any of my colleagues (Jenkins & Wingate 2015).

Instead of allocating considerable responsibility for academic literacy instruction to subject lecturers as I am suggesting, it is often delegated to staff in service units who hold marginalised and short-term positions and are therefore unable to specialise in the teaching of language and literacy for particular disciplines. In many universities, EAP and skills courses are the only literacy support on offer.[1] To further stress the limitations of this offer, I will now consider what students really need to learn.

[1] There are many initiatives by EAP units concerned with discipline-specific approaches and collaboration with lecturers in the disciplines, which are small-scale rather than institution-wide. These tend to be mentioned in discussions at conferences, but are not usually published.

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3. Students' literacy needs and discipline-specific support

As I said earlier, students' literacy problems become most obvious in their writing. This may explain why most instructional and support measures focus on writing only, when in fact writing is the end product of a complex literacy process. This process involves identifying relevant sources, evaluating these sources for relevant information, synthesising this information into an argument, and then presenting the argument in a logical and coherent manner. Writing instruction typically ignores the first three steps, called 'reading-to-write' (Dobson & Feak 2001), and focuses only on the last step in the process, the presentation. When the instruction is generic, the reading-to-write steps, which are known to be challenging for students (e.g. Hirvela & Du 2013; McCulloch 2013), cannot be addressed. This is because identifying and evaluating evidence from sources can only be learned in relation to discipline-specific knowledge and in the context of a specific assignment, and effective support can only be given by the subject lecturer.

However, for the reasons I have explained earlier, academics in the disciplines do not usually provide this support. The only explicit advice students receive in their study programmes is writing guidelines, which are usually part of programme handbooks, and lecturers' feedback comments on assignments. Although feedback is potentially the most individualised and specific instructional method, research shows that its value can be limited because students make insufficient use of it. This in turn may be the result of feedback being formulated in ways that are incomprehensible to students (Carless 2006; Walker 2009). In both writing guidelines and feedback comments, requirements are 'communicated as if they were common-sense and transparent' (Lillis & Turner 2001: 58), and unfamiliar concepts such as 'criticality' or 'argument' are vaguely used to explain expected conventions. I will give you some examples of this type of feedback. In a programme handbook for a B.A. in Law, students are asked to 'apply appropriate legal English', 'construct clear legal arguments and evince sound legal reasoning' (Foster & Deane 2011: 90). Typical comments found in an analysis of lecturers' feedback for first-year undergraduates in Applied Linguistics included 'You did not answer the question', 'This is not relevant', and 'Essay displays very little criticality' (Wingate 2012). Negative comments like these, which give no further explanation of the weakness and no advice for improvement, make learning from feedback impossible. Their alienating effect can be seen in the following extracts from interviews, in which I asked undergraduate students about feedback they had recently received.

> Exactly, why isn't it relevant? 'cause like for me it is relevant 'cause I've got like what I want to say in my head and I can justify it in my head. But then 'it's not relevant', I can't see why it's not relevant.

> Comments were not explained to me properly, like 'your conclusion does not match the reasons you gave'. And I would be left hanging there trying to figure out how it did not match. It made perfect sense to me, which kind of disappointed me because I still cannot see where some of my mistakes are.

These reactions to feedback are similar to those found in other studies (Carless 2006; Weaver 2006). They show that in order to make feedback an effective method of literacy instruction, wording would need to be improved, and it would need to be complemented by 'assessment dialogues' (Carless 2006: 230) to ensure that students understand and make use of the

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comments. This, however, would require more explicit literacy knowledge on the part of the lecturers.

4. Collaborative discipline-specific approaches

So far I have discussed common misconceptions around academic literacy, student learning needs, and the rather inadequate literacy instruction that students currently receive outside and within disciplines. Now I am going to consider how this situation could be improved. Clearly, the first step would be staff training which helps lecturers understand the complexity of academic literacy and their role in students' acquisition of it. An important part of the training would be to show lecturers that taking on academic literacy instruction does not mean substantial extra work, but that instructional methods can be integrated into their regular teaching and assessment activities. This integration could be more easily achieved if lecturers were supported by EAP staff who as English language experts are better able to articulate literacy requirements, develop instructional materials on the basis of text analysis, and pinpoint underlying problems in student assignments.

There is a growing recognition that the collaboration between EAP specialists and subject specialists can considerably enhance students' academic literacy development. Collaborative approaches have been reported from universities in the UK (Morley 2008) and South Africa (e.g. Thesen & van Pletzen 2006; Paxton 2011). However, these initiatives are often limited to specific contexts without making a wider impact beyond individual departments or institutions. An exception is Australia, where collaborative learning and language development has reached national policy level. Therefore, let's have a closer look at the Australian model.

In Australian universities, support for students was traditionally provided through central writing courses in the so-called 'Academic Language and Learning (ALL)' units. In the 1990s the University of Wollongong launched the 'collaborative, curriculum-integrated literacy instruction' initiative (Purser 2011: 30), in which ALL staff began to work closely with staff in the academic disciplines. This collaboration was based on the recognition that all students need to learn the genres and associated literacy conventions of their disciplines through explicit instruction, which, as Skillen (2006: 141) explains, should not be 'peripheral but central to study in the disciplines'. The objectives of this collaboration were to help 'teachers across the disciplines recognise the linguistic nature of academic learning and teaching' (Purser 2011: 34), to make 'specific changes in teaching and learning so that student learning is better understood and supported' (Purser et al. 2008: 3), and to involve 'the Learning Developer in more than the teaching of writing, and the subject lecturers in more than the teaching of their subject content' (Skillen 2006: 144). The positive learning outcomes at the University of Wollongong led an increasing number of Australian universities to implement collaborative and curriculum-integrated academic literacy instruction (Arkoudis & Starfield 2007). More recently, this approach has been recommended in the Higher Education Standards Framework (TEQSA 2011). Similar initiatives have been reported from the University of Cape Town, where members of the central 'Language Development

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Group' (LDG) form long-term partnerships with departments to integrate academic literacy teaching into the disciplines, aiming to achieve 'systemic change across the university, rather than on designing fragile bridges for "non-traditional" students' (Thesen & van Pletzen 2006: 7). The reports from the LDG do not reveal, however, to what extent collaboration with subject lecturers was sought.

The publications on the collaborative and discipline-specific instructional initiatives in Australian, South African and UK universities leave a number of questions unanswered. There is no explicit account of the teaching methods and the theoretical frameworks underpinning them. Furthermore, little information is provided as to what contributions the EAP/learning specialists and the subject lecturers make in the collaboration. Lastly, it remains unclear to what extent literacy instruction was embedded in the curriculum, or whether it was just an adjunct to the mainstream curricula. This lack of information makes it difficult for institutions and individual practitioners to learn from these examples and develop similar approaches. For this reason, I want to discuss a project that my colleague Chris Tribble and I carried out at King's College London with the aim to provide some insights relating to these questions.

5. An academic writing intervention: Insights into teaching methods and collaboration

In 2011 I obtained institutional funding to develop discipline-specific academic writing resources in the four disciplines of Applied Linguistics, History, Management and Pharmacy. The aim of the project was to develop an instructional model that could then be applied across the university. The objectives were to identify teaching methods that were effective in terms of learning outcomes and valued by the students; furthermore, we wanted to explore feasible ways of collaborating with subject lecturers. In the development of this model, we drew on various existing approaches to literacy/writing instruction, including 'Academic literacies', which calls for attention to 'practices' surrounding writing such as power relations and identity issues (e.g. Lillis & Scott 2007). However, our model is mainly based on the genre approaches of English for specific purposes (ESP) (e.g. Swales 1990) and systemic functional linguistics (SFL) (e.g. Martin & Rose 2008) as I am convinced that genre analysis is the best method for helping students understand not only the linguistic and rhetorical features of texts but also their social function and communicative purpose. The need for writing curricula to 'begin with texts and their structures, particularly among novice students' (Johns 2011: 64) has been recognised by many scholars from the different genre schools (e.g. Hyland 2004; Gardner 2012); in fact, genre has been advocated as 'the most social constructivist' (Johns 2008: 237) and the 'most important and influential' (Hyland 2008: 543) concept in literacy instruction. Genre analysis in ESP is usually carried out on expert texts such as published research articles (for an exception, see Nesi & Gardner 2012); however, when we used expert texts in academic writing classes in the past, we often heard from students that they found these texts not only intimidating but also irrelevant to the assignments they had to write. We therefore decided to draw on student genres for the development of the writing resources.

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5.1 Development of resources

We used our own discipline, Applied Linguistics, as a pilot for the development and implementation of the learning/teaching resources. These focused on the key genres that students in this programme have to produce, which are essay and dissertation. For each genre, we selected a set of high-scoring and low-scoring exemplar texts from a corpus of assessed texts written by previous students, and conducted a move analysis of the genre's different components (sub-genres), such as Introduction, Discussion of Findings, or Conclusion, following the ESP tradition (Swales 1990). Our move analysis is presented in the form of a 'commentary' in the learning/teaching resources, describing the moves and their communicative purpose, in order to enable students to conduct their own genre analysis during academic writing workshops. The intention was that students would work out the expected features of a genre through the comparison of several examples of high- and low-quality texts and the accompanying commentaries – without us having to tell them how to write the genre. Figure 1 presents an extract of the materials on Introductions.

In addition to move analysis, we drew on SFL for the lexico-grammatical analysis of texts in order to show students which devices are used for textual organisation. We also used discourse-semantic analysis of themes and paragraph relations to uncover the argumentative structure, or 'chains of reasoning' (Ravelli 2004: 107) in texts. In the learning resources, we visualised the development of argument through synoptic figures of paragraph arrangements. I cannot go into further detail here about the various genre-analytical tools we used, but this information is provided elsewhere (Tribble & Wingate 2013; Wingate 2015).

As insiders in the discipline of Applied Linguistics, developing these teaching/learning resources was relatively easy for us. Developing resources for unfamiliar disciplines was a harder challenge, for which we relied on the collaboration with the subject experts.

5.2 Collaboration with subject lecturers

Given the current climate of higher education, where engagement with student learning is not rewarded and lecturers are under constant pressure to produce high impact research, it proved difficult to entice academic staff to collaborate in a learning-oriented project. We relied on our contacts in the participating departments and recruited lecturers who we knew were interested in students' learning development. The lecturers were asked to identify a target genre for which they felt teaching support was needed, and to provide us with text examples that were assessed and accompanied by feedback comments. The genres selected by the lecturers were (1) the argumentative essay for History, (2) the critique for Management,[2] and (3) the laboratory report for Pharmacy. The lecturers then gave us sets of high- and low-scoring exemplar texts together with their grades and feedback comments.

Our task as EAP specialists was to analyse these exemplar texts and identify textual features and patterns that distinguished the quality of the texts. Our way in to the texts from

[2] See Nesi & Gardner (2012) for the definition of this genre family. In the case of this management assignment, it was the critical evaluation of a management model or concept through the lens of a certain typology.

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TASK 1

1. Review the analyses for the first three introductions in high-scoring assignments.
2. Complete your own analysis of Example 4.
3. Summarise what would appear to be the desirable features of assignment introductions.

EXAMPLE A. *Assignment title: What counts as validity in formative assessment?* **Introduction** The role of assessment in language teaching and learning is complex and often politically charged. In recent years, many researchers have promoted a more socially and democratically equitable conception of assessment (e.g. Shohamy 2001; Lynch 2001), that is non-psychometric and non-standardised. This has led to the promotion, endorsement and implementation of various classroom-based alternatives, many of which have shared characteristics and concerns (see Leung 2005: 870 for a brief overview). [1] Despite this change in tide, however, a number of old questions rightly persist. In particular the issues of validity and reliability, which Leung (2005) refers to as "the quality and soundness" of the assessment approach, are still prevalent (p. 869). Interestingly, these questions are posed by those spearheading this new movement in an attempt to ensure theoretical, empirical and epistemological robustness (i.e. Leung 2004). [2] In this discussion I shall address the issue of validity in regard to Formative Assessment (FA). In the first section, I shall define, examine and then problematise the central tenets of FA; this problematisation will raise three key questions in regard to validity in FA. In the second section, I will begin by briefly delineating some of the underlying assumptions of validity in conventional assessment practice. Following this, I shall return to the three crucial and interrelated questions previously identified, through which I argue for a reconceptualised understanding of validity in FA that acknowledges its complex and contingent nature. In my conclusion, I shall argue that subscription to this viewpoint will enable FA to attain a more prominent position in educational assessment. [3]	[1] This section establishes the intellectual context and refers to relevant authorities. [2] Refers to the issue or problem that is going to be the focus of the assignment. [3] Provides a map/set of signposts which guide the reader through the rest of the assignment.

Figure 1 Introductions in high-scoring assignments

unfamiliar disciplines began with a move analysis which gave us a sense of the schematic structure expected in the genre. The next step was a fine-grained analysis of rhetorical and linguistic features within the moves, in the same way as we did with the Applied Linguistics texts; however, in the other disciplines we very much relied on the additional information,

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such as grades and feedback comments, and on consultation with the subject lecturers for clarification of the discourse-specific conventions. It is important to remember that all this crucial information is usually not available to novice students. We regarded it as beneficial that we were 'novices' in three of the disciplinary genres for which we developed resources as this situation provided us with a clear understanding of students' learning needs. Interestingly, our genre-analytical work was more or less identical to the tasks we set students in the learning/teaching resources.

In addition to providing text examples and information on disciplinary conventions, the subject lecturers were also asked to co-teach in the academic literacy workshops where the teaching/learning resources were presented.

5.3 Implementation and evaluation

The academic literacy workshops were an extra-curricular offer to all students in the respective study programmes. They were strategically timed at the periods when the students were working on an assignment in the target genre. Students were given a materials pack, consisting of (1) three high-scoring text examples with commentary, (2) one high-scoring text example for which students had to write a commentary, (3) a 'Notes' section in which students were asked to list their observations of expected features of successful writing, (4) two low-scoring text examples with commentary, and (5) a reflection section. The instructional approach was underpinned by social constructivist theory, which understands learning as occurring through social interaction (e.g. Bruner 1966), and followed the Sydney School's teaching/learning cycle (Rothery 1996). The cycle moves from the teacher-supported phases of 'Deconstruction' and 'Joint Construction' to 'Independent Construction'. In the deconstruction phase, the student groups analysed and discussed the text examples; the EAP and subject specialist were available for advice and were frequently consulted and involved in the discussions. The students had been asked to bring their assignment drafts to the workshop, and in the joint construction phase, they applied what they had learned in the deconstruction phase in peer-editing the drafts. Independent construction would then happen outside the classroom, when students finalised their assignments.

Three methods were used to evaluate this approach, i.e. questionnaires, recordings of the group interactions, and tracking the changes that students made to their drafts in the joint construction phase. The questionnaire responses were highly positive; almost all respondents regarded the materials as very useful/useful for writing their next assignments. Comments in the open-ended questions valued in particular the use of student (rather than expert) texts, the presentation of 'bad' examples, and the fact that the subject lecturer was available for consultation. We transcribed the recordings of the group interactions and analysed them for utterances which revealed that the students gained new insights from the text analysis. We found evidence of learning in each recording, as well as in the tracked changes that students had made to their drafts (examples are given in Tribble & Wingate 2013). A drawback in the evaluation was that we could not obtain performance data to gather evidence of the impact of our method on students' assignments. This was due to restrictions in the collaboration with the subject lecturers, which I will explain next.

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5.4 Limitations of the academic writing intervention

The project met the objectives as we identified a specific method for academic literacy instruction which can easily be applied to other disciplines. We also identified possible contributions that writing experts and subject lecturers can make in a collaborative approach. Although genre pedagogies have been widely used since Swales's (1981, 1990) seminal work in move analysis, our approach is original in the use of student genres, a feature that was highly appreciated by the students because of the relevance to their own writing. The positive evaluation results certainly encouraged us to recommend this instructional approach within and beyond our institution through publications and staff development events. However, in view of student learning needs, which I discussed earlier, the approach has clear shortcomings. One is that it only partially addressed student needs by focusing on writing and excluding the steps that precede writing. Another shortcoming is that although the instruction was discipline-specific, it was 'additional' (Wingate 2011); that is it was offered in extra workshops rather than being embedded into students' regular curriculum. Although the workshops enjoyed high levels of student participation, they did not include all students in the respective study programmes and might have left out some students who would have needed academic literacy support most. Research has shown that successful and ambitious students tend to take advantage of this type of support provision (Durkin & Main 2002), while weaker students, burdened with the requirements of the main curriculum, do not. Lastly, collaboration with subject lecturers was difficult and required a lot of persistence. Although the project funding included some incentives for the participating lecturers, information from them was difficult to obtain, and, as mentioned earlier, we were not given access to students' writing after the intervention in order to gain performance data. While this lack of input is understandable given the workloads and research priorities of academic staff, it also highlights the need for an institutional culture that values lecturers' engagement with student learning and academic literacy.

There is currently little sign of change in the institutional culture of universities in the UK and other Anglophone countries, where the old model of extra-curricular, generic literacy support persists. Moving from the current extra-curricular model and from 'additional' models, such as the intervention that I have just presented, would require 'top-down' policies, meaning that university managements would first need to be convinced of the long-term benefits of a curriculum-integrated approach to academic literacy instruction, and subsequently would need to invest in the approach by (1) providing workload space to academics to follow this approach, (2) restructuring the current EAP service to enable collaboration and (3) acknowledging improved teaching practice in their reward and promotion systems. Convincing university managers to make such policy changes is a long-term goal, which in my view can only be achieved if we accumulate resounding evidence from 'bottom-up' projects to demonstrate that curriculum-integrated academic literacy instruction leads to improvements in student learning.

The Australian example shows that policy changes at institutional and national levels can be brought about bottom-up, starting from a small-scale initiative. Plenty of initiatives aimed at enhancing academic literacy support or student writing have been reported in the literature (for the most recent examples, see Lillis et al. 2015); however, an inherent limitation of many

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is that they tend to take place in specific settings, represent individual efforts and one-off 'additional' activities, and are insufficiently explicit about the methods used, which limits their transferability to other contexts. What makes the Australian example stand out is that evidence of the positive impact of curriculum integration of literacy instruction on student writing and learning in general at the University of Wollongong convinced other universities to follow this approach. The Australian example also demonstrates that collaboration between EAP specialists and subject lecturers facilitates the integration of literacy support in the curriculum, and that subject lecturers can be convinced to engage when they receive support and practical advice as to how make academic literacy instruction 'part of the general teaching of a content subject' (Skillen 2006: 143).

However, in many Anglophone universities outside Australia, EAP/learning development units do not have the remit or resources to pursue the intense collaboration with academic departments needed to facilitate curriculum-integrated literacy support. I learned from conversations with directors of these units at UK universities that, because of budget cuts, they are increasingly relying on temporary, hourly-paid staff to deliver their generic courses. These short-term staff members cannot be expected to collaborate with academics in the disciplines, as this requires long-term partnerships and some level of socialisation by the EAP specialist into the partner discipline. Given that current institutional structures do not facilitate collaboration, an alternative bottom-up approach is to include training in academic literacy instruction into existing staff development programmes. I have begun this approach at King's College London, and this is the second initiative I want to present here.

6. Staff development and curriculum integration

In my view, the most suitable target group for a staff development course on academic literacy instruction are the participants in the Postgraduate Certificate of Academic Practice (PGCAP) programme. These are mostly young lecturers who have to obtain the certificate as a teaching qualification. Showing them ways of embedding academic literacy instruction into the curriculum early in their career provides a good chance that they will make this a permanent part of their teaching practice. As the PGCAP programme is attended by lecturers from a range of disciplines, the course on academic literacy instruction also provides an opportunity to develop academic literacy ACROSS the curriculum, as it is likely that successive cohorts of participants will disseminate insights from the academic literacy course in their departments and gradually improve the instructional provision.

For these reasons, I designed an optional module called 'Supporting the development of academic literacy' for the PGCAP, and taught it for the first time in the autumn term of the 2015/2016 academic year. The content for the five three-hour sessions was the following:

1. Concept of academic literacy; student learning needs versus current support provision
2. Theoretical frameworks underpinning academic literacy instruction
3. Embedding literacy instruction into teaching and assessment
4. Participants' analysis of own context; proposals for improvements (outside the classroom/independent work; online submission)

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5. Discussion of proposals; discussion of possible initiatives/interventions in participants' departments.

I will only discuss in more detail Session 3, which laid the ground for the proposals that the participants developed in Sessions 4 and 5, and the interventions that they consequently designed. Six methods were proposed for embedding academic literacy instruction into lecturers' regular teaching and assessment activities, which I will briefly present here. For all six methods, I provided examples from my own teaching practice.

1. Induction activities: Including academic literacy workshops and tasks, for instance library searches, into Induction Week. Currently, the common format of Induction is that students spend days sitting passively in lecture halls listening to endless presentations about university life and their study programme (Edward 2003). Interactive workshops including case studies of students' first experience with writing assignments, and problem-solving tasks, such as referencing and library searches, would break the pattern of passivity and provide first insights into disciplinary academic literacy requirements and conventions.
2. Reading and writing: This would be a systematic programme of guided pre-reading. For each lecture, a pre-reading text is presented with guiding questions and discussion tasks. In the week before the lecture, students have to submit their contributions online and contribute to the online discussion. This method fosters academic reading, which has been largely neglected in the typical student support provision, and also ensures that students are prepared for the lecture.
3. 'Literacy windows' in lectures and seminars: This means that in regular classroom sessions some time is set aside to focus on academic literacy conventions and requirements. For instance, when new knowledge is introduced in a lecture, relevant text examples can be used to show how this knowledge is presented and debated in the literature, how claims are made and how authors refer to, agree or disagree with other authors. Also, classroom time can be usefully allocated for explicit information on the expected student assignments.
4. Follow-up tutorials: The literacy windows integrated into regular classroom sessions could be followed up by tutorials or workshops of the type we offered in our writing intervention. The text examples that were presented in the literacy windows, and assignments written by previous students could be subjected to a more fine-grained genre analysis. For the design and delivery of these tutorials, the help of EAP specialists would be needed.
5. Formative feedback: In many study programmes, feedback could be used more effectively by training assessors in how to construct it in a formative way, and by implementing a coherent progression in the assignments, so that the comments on one assignment feed forward to the next.
6. Personal tutorials: In most universities, students are allocated a personal tutor who provides pastoral care and advises on academic progress. There is some evidence that many students avoid tutorial meetings (Owen 2002), which suggests that they may not find them useful. This would not be the case if tutorials were used to discuss and explain feedback that students have received on their assignments, and for further clarification of genre requirements. Tutorials would thus be the space for individualised literacy support and for the 'assessment dialogues' (Carless 2006: 230) that are currently missing.

Each of these methods on its own would mark an improvement on the currently available support; used in combination, these methods would represent a holistic curriculum-embedded

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instructional approach. The participants expressed some surprise at the fact that most methods would require no more than some changes to their current practice (e.g. formative feedback, personal tutorials), but also felt that it would be worthwhile investing in those methods that require more time and resources (e.g. developing the materials for pre-reading or for the follow-up tutorials). The evaluation of the module as a whole was overwhelmingly positive. The participants particularly acknowledged that the concept of academic literacy had given them a better understanding of students' learning needs, and that the module had been an 'eye-opener' in relation to the shortcomings of academic writing support in the university and their departments. The assignment for the module was to design an intervention in their department or study programme, based on the analysis of the instructional provision that the participants had carried out in Session 4. Here are some examples of the planned interventions: (1) a workshop for reading research articles in Bioscience; (2) online writing materials using genre analysis in Classics; (3) literacy windows built in a series of lectures in Political Science; and (4) a workshop on formative feedback for academic staff in Business Studies. All participants intended to carry out their interventions in this or the next academic year.

These outcomes are promising, and I will contact the participants at a later stage to find out to what extent the module had an impact on their own teaching practice, or even better, on the instructional provision in their departments. However, even if some change was achieved in some of the departments, it is obvious that the process of change is slow, and that it will take many re-runs of the module before systematic academic literacy instruction is provided within the curriculum and across the curricula of the institution.

7. Final thoughts

Looking at the situation of academic literacy support in Anglophone universities, I find it sometimes difficult not to be pessimistic. Two decades of critical publications on the shortcomings on the current instructional provision (e.g. Lea & Street 1998; Benesch 2001; Turner 2011) have not led to much change. It is difficult to speculate why the remedial model of EAP/Study Skills courses so stubbornly persists, even though there is much evidence that it fails to address student's learning needs. One reason may be that the publications do not provide university managers with clear enough proposals of how improvements can be made. This is particularly the case when publications are mainly concerned with advocating a specific model and criticising others (e.g. Academic literacies versus EAP; see the discussion in Wingate & Tribble 2012) without offering convincing alternatives. Another reason may be that university managers stick with the existing provision because it is much cheaper to offer generic courses in central service units than provide staff development on a large scale and allocate time and resources to lecturers to enable them to integrate literacy instruction in their curriculum.

However, there is also much reason for optimism. First, Anglophone universities face increasing competition from English-medium instruction offered in several non-Anglophone countries where tuition fees are much lower. To maintain their intake of high-fee paying

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students, universities will eventually have to offer more adequate support to students. Second, in addition to the Australian example, convincing evidence is gradually emerging from various other initiatives concerned with curriculum-integrated academic literacy instruction. I have presented two small-scale ones, which describe a specific teaching method and an approach to prepare subject lecturers for collaboration and curriculum-integrated literacy instruction. A far more influential one is the project on which this conference is based, called 'Enhancing English across the Curriculum'. This project, stretching across four universities in Hong Kong, also works on the principles of collaboration and professional development. Project initiatives include EAP specialists helping academics in the disciplines to be more explicit in assessment requirements and in the language of feedback, and creating teaching and learning resources that will foster students' communication in their disciplines. This project, starting from a larger scale than most others, clearly has the potential to change the instructional provision in Hong Kong's tertiary sector, in the same way as this happened in Australia.

To summarise and end on a positive note, all evidence available so far shows that there are three essential ingredients for effective academic literacy support: curriculum-embeddedness, genre analysis, and, to facilitate the first two ingredients, collaboration between EAP and subject specialists. The positive note and cause for optimism is that the initiatives discussed here, and certainly many others that are underway, include at least two of these ingredients. Things are moving in the right direction. We will need to persevere with our initiatives, and with publishing their encouraging outcomes in order to benefit students with adequate academic literacy instruction across the curriculum.

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