

BALEAP: Professional Issues Meeting

Challenges and Tensions in Materials Design for English for Academic Purposes

Friday 01 November, 2024, [Richmond Building, University of Portsmouth](#)



**UNIVERSITY OF
PORTSMOUTH**
FACULTY OF
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL
SCIENCES

Please find the almost final draft schedule for *Challenges and Tensions in Materials Design for English Academic Purposes* on pages 2-4 of this document.

Starting the day with a plenary by **Professor Nigel Harwood** of the University of Sheffield, the sessions for the rest of the day have been divided into two broad strands for the exploration of professional issues relating to the theme of the meeting. These are **REFLECTIONS ON MATERIALS DESIGN**, which will take place in [\[room TBD\]](#), and **THE PRACTICE OF MATERIALS DESIGN** in [\[room TBD\]](#); each strand has been further divided into three subcategories:

REFLECTIONS ON MATERIALS DESIGN [\[room TBD\]](#)

A1 *Theorising Materials Design in Practice* (Talks)

A2 *Disciplined Materials Design* (Talks)

A3 *Planning for Materials Design* (Talks)

THE PRACTICE OF MATERIALS DESIGN [\[room TBD\]](#)

B1 *Designing and Refining Materials* (Workshop)

B2 *Inclusive Materials Design* (Talks)

B3 *Writing Materials Design* (Talks)

The workshop in the morning (B1) should last for 50 minutes with an additional 10 minutes for comments, questions or reflections. All other sessions consist of pairs of talks organised by a general subcategory. In line with other previous BALEAP events, in these sessions each talk should last for 20 minutes followed by a combined 20 minutes for questions, comments, and discussion on one or the other or both of the talks.

Note that we will ask participants to attend both talks in each slot (i.e. regrettably it won't really be possible to see the first talk in one session and the second talk in another). Clicking on the title of each talk or the workshop in the programme below should take you to the abstract for that session.

MORNING SESSION

09:30 - 13:30

TIME	DURATION	LOCATION	ACTIVITY	
09.30-10.00	30 mins	Richmond Building	Registration	
10.00-11.10	1 hour 10 mins	Richmond Building	OPENING PLENARY	
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the PiM and general housekeeping (10.00-10.10) • Introduction to the plenary speaker, Professor Nigel Harwood (10.10-10.15) • Plenary talk by Professor Nigel Harwood (10.15-10.55) - click here to see <i>Abstract</i> • Q & A (10.55-11.10) 	
11.10-11.30	20 mins	Richmond Building	Morning coffee break / exhibition	
11.30-12.30	1 hour	Richmond Building	REFLECTIONS ON MATERIALS DESIGN	THE PRACTICE OF MATERIALS DESIGN
			<i>A1: Theorising Materials Design</i>	<i>B1: Designing and Refining Materials with AI</i>
			11.30-12.30: TALKS <u>A spoonful of sugar – helping the theory into practice pre-sessional go down (well)</u> Dr Susie Cowley-Haselden University of Warwick <u>EAP materials development: a sociocultural perspective</u> Dr Luis Carabantes Queen Mary, University of London	11.30-12.30: WORKSHOP <u>AI4LA: Creating AI EAP Materials from the Principle of Language Adjustment</u> Kelly Webb-Davies University of Oxford
12.30-13.30	1 hour	Richmond Building	Lunch	

AFTERNOON SESSION I

13:30 - 14:45

TIME	DURATION	LOCATION	ACTIVITY	
13.30-14.30	1 hour	Richmond Building	REFLECTIONS ON MATERIALS DESIGN	THE PRACTICE OF MATERIALS DESIGN
			<i>A2: Disciplined Materials Design</i>	<i>B2: Inclusive Materials Design</i>
			<p>13.30-14.30: TALKS</p> <p><u><i>We're all in this together!: collaboration between EAP and subject specialists to design assessment literacy seminars</i></u> Alison S. Leslie Dr Alex Cheleeger University of Leeds</p> <p><u><i>Who do we think we are? Re-examining our core theories to develop Insessional materials in collaboration with the School of Law</i></u> Katherine High Vicki Stevenson University of Bristol</p>	<p>13.30-14.30: TALKS</p> <p><u><i>Critical Reflections on Designing Mobile-Optimised EAP Self-Study Materials for Students from Widening Participation Backgrounds</i></u> Dr I-Chen Hsieh Coventry University</p> <p><u><i>Fostering Digital Accessibility Awareness in EAP Materials Design: A Collaborative Approach</i></u> Amy Aisha Brown University of Portsmouth Ella Ballinger King's College London</p>
14.30-14.45	15 mins	Richmond Building	Afternoon coffee break 1 / exhibition	

AFTERNOON SESSION II

14:45 - 16:45

TIME	DURATION	LOCATION	ACTIVITY	
			REFLECTIONS ON MATERIALS DESIGN	THE PRACTICE OF MATERIALS DESIGN
14.45-15.45	1 hour	Richmond Building	<i>A3: Planning for Materials Design</i>	<i>B3: Writing Materials Design</i>
			<p>14.45-15.45: TALKS</p> <p><u>The ethics of materials design: a critical account of deficit needs analyses and neglecting language in context</u> Dr Michelle Evans University of Leeds</p> <p><u>A Material Change: How AI-powered Language Tools will reconfigure priorities for EAP curriculum design</u> Laura Richards University of Leeds</p>	<p>14.45-15.45: TALKS</p> <p><u>Using student samples in in-sessional materials design: challenges and tensions</u> Debra Jones University of Bristol</p> <p><u>Use your own words: Questioning EAP materials on paraphrasing</u> Dr Milada Walková University of Leeds</p>
15.45-16.00	15 mins	Richmond Building	Afternoon coffee break 2 / exhibition	
16.00-16.45	45 mins	Richmond Building	CLOSING PANEL DISCUSSION / SMALL FOCUS GROUP REFLECTIONS	

ABSTRACTS

PLENARY

Click [here](#) to return to the **Morning Session** schedule.

Professor Nigel Harwood, University of Sheffield

[Abstract for this sessions to be added t0 the final draft of the schedule]

REFLECTIONS ON MATERIALS DESIGN

A1 Theorising Materials Design in Practice 11.30-12.30

A spoonful of sugar – helping the theory into practice pre-sessional go down (well)

Dr Susie Cowley-Haselden, University of Warwick

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Employing scholarship and/or research to enhance teaching practice is key to professional values in both the HEA Fellowship and the BALEAP TEAP Fellowship schemes (Advance HE, 2023; BALEAP, 2022). While professionally valued, a theory into practice (TiP) approach to pre-sessional course design is not necessarily appreciated by, or visible to, those delivering the course (Cowley-Haselden & Monbec, 2019). I have spent the last decade writing pre-sessional courses. The theoretical underpinnings of the courses I have written have been less reinforced concrete, more exposed beams. I have been unapologetic in making the theory/knowledge base explicit to teachers (and students). Some teachers I have worked with over the years have welcomed this, some have questioned the rationale for it, others have flatly refused to cover the theory in the classroom. All responses that mirror those found in Cowley-Haselden and Monbec (2019). Not everyone's approach to teaching EAP is the same, and getting a group of teachers to buy into (and feel comfortable with) a particular vision can be challenging, for all concerned. This talk will outline the author's approaches to pre-sessional course design that enacts theory into practice (TiP) and detail how the teacher induction and observation programmes have been designed with Engaged Pedagogy (hooks, 1994) in mind and work to make teachers feel comfortable with, and crucially, believe in, a radical about turn in the design of the pre-sessional they had worked on for many years. The key tenets of hook's (1994) Engaged Pedagogy that influenced the design of the teacher development elements of the pre-sessional, included promoting democracy, valuing prior experience and knowledge, encouraging dialogue and drawing attention to a critical view of EAP and the institution in which it operates. In our experience this approach leads to highly valued teacher development and makes a TiP pre-sessional easier to swallow.

References

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EAP materials development: a sociocultural perspective

Dr Luis Carabantes, Queen Mary, University of London

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Designing materials for language education has received considerable attention from a research perspective (see Tomlinson, 2012; Carabantes & Paran, 2022). However, little is known about the process of materials development in EAP (Stoller, 2016), particularly during the stages of selection, adaptation, and design. There is, therefore, a compelling need to explore how EAP practitioners, as materials developers, engage with the tools of their profession, given the centrality of materials in EAP instruction. To address this gap, this presentation will report on my experience engaging with the various processes involved in materials development, specifically selection, adaptation, design, and use (Tomlinson, 2012). The focus will be on the creation of a general academic writing module, available to the entire student population at Queen Mary University of London as an optional,

non-credit-bearing in-session course. Using the sociocultural framework of Activity Theory and data from students and EAP teachers, I will examine the systemic contradictions—historically accumulated contextual tensions (Engeström, 1987)—encountered during these stages of materials development, and the ways in which I sought to overcome them. Alongside the exploration of contradictions, the presentation will argue that the design of materials in EAP should reflect sociocultural understandings of language teaching and learning. It will also contend that materials development is a key area for promoting professional development for practitioners, offering situated opportunities to integrate research, theory, and practice in EAP instruction. The presentation will conclude by suggesting a sociocultural framework for other practitioners to incorporate contextually relevant elements into their materials development.

References

Carabantes, L., & Paran, A. (2022). I preferred to take another activity from the textbook: An activity-theoretical study of learning to design language teaching materials. *The Modern Language Journal*, 106(4), 659-674.

Engeström, Y. (1987). *Learning by expanding: An activity-theoretical approach to developmental research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Stoller, F. L. (2016). EAP materials and tasks. In P. Shaw & K. Hyland (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of English for academic purposes* (pp. 577-591). Abingdon: Routledge.

Tomlinson, B. (2012). *Source to be supplied by presenter*.

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A2 Disciplined Materials Design 13.30-14.30

We're all in this together!: collaboration between EAP and subject specialists to design assessment literacy seminars

Alison S. Leslie, University of Leeds

Dr Alex Cheleeger, University of Leeds

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This presentation outlines the pedagogical strategies and challenges encountered in the design and delivery of assessment literacy materials on a postgraduate module in the School of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Leeds. Recognizing the necessity to aid a diverse student cohort in comprehending assessment requirements, the convener facilitated collaborations between the lecturers and an EAP specialist to design and co-deliver an assessment seminar. With the aim of maximizing its benefit to students, the team engaged in extensive discussions, co-created the teaching materials, and jointly delivered the session using student exemplars of writing as the core material. Taking genre-based and academic literacies approaches to designing materials highlighted the importance of exploring writing as a social practice. However, one significant challenge throughout this design was balancing the needs of content specialists as markers with an EAP focus on nurturing writing as a process and fostering student agency as writers. For example, it emphasized the need to distinguish between Western and non-Western writing models and decolonize both the sociology and writing curricula. The level of scaffolding, including the selection and use of exemplars, also posed challenges, as it was crucial to mitigate the risks of plagiarism and over-prescription while modeling 'good' and 'bad' writing. Issues such as the optimal timing for delivery of these materials, whether as a stand-alone session or as part of progressive development throughout the semester, remain under careful consideration for future assessment seminars. The analysis and reflection on this practice and its challenges aims to inform collaborations among educators in higher education institutions. The findings are conceived to contribute to the ongoing discourse on effective pedagogical approaches in diverse, international educational settings, particularly regarding the integration of academic skills with subject content in materials design.

References

Clarence, S. and McKenna, S. (2017). Developing academic literacies through understanding the nature of disciplinary knowledge. *London Review of Education*, 15(1), pp. 38-49.

Hyland, K. (2013). *Materials for Developing Writing Skills. Developing Materials for Language Teaching*. London: Bloomsbury. Pp.391-405.

Hyland, K. (2016). *Teaching and Researching Writing*. Oxon: Routledge.

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Who do we think we are? Re-examining our core theories to develop Insessional materials in collaboration with the School of Law

Katherine High, University of Bristol

Vicki Stevenson, University of Bristol

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The [presentation] highlights the tensions surrounding a complex collaboration as part of a Needs Analysis project with the Centre for Academic Language & Development (CALD) and the School of Law at the University of Bristol (UoB). This large-scale longitudinal study involved multiple stakeholders, including the Law Senior Leadership Team, Programme and Unit Directors, key administration staff as well as the students themselves at undergraduate and postgraduate level. Inevitably, with such differing priorities and roles, tensions and conflicts arose around students' perceived needs and what could be addressed by a revised EAP curriculum. Moving from the challenges of identifying student needs through a range of data collection activities, the presentation will also share findings on the materials development phase. Favouring the Academic Literacies (Lea & Street, 1998) and CEM models (Sloan & Porter, 2009), we have found that some of our core theories that underpin our materials design can often be in direct conflict with non-EAP collaborations. To what extent is our approach the right one? How much are we listening to and learning from our

collaborators and vice versa? How do we avoid a “them and us” approach, and do we need to? This presentation will share critical reflections in response to these provocations by sharing insights from this large-scale project with the School of Law and its impact on materials development. We will also share an initial evaluation on how the revised materials are working so far this semester with PG Law students.

Lea M. & Street, B. (1998) Student writing in higher education: an academic literacies approach. *Studies in higher education*, 23(2), 157-172

Sloan, D., & Porter, E. (2009). Contextualising, Embedding and Mapping (CEM): A model and framework for rethinking the design and delivery of an in-session academic literacy programme support

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A3 Planning for Materials Design 14.45-15.45

The ethics of materials design: a critical account of deficit needs analyses and neglecting language in context

Dr Michelle Evans, University of Leeds

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Undertaking needs analyses and designing learning materials relies on ontological, epistemological and ethical decisions. This talk is framed around a consideration of what it means to take an ethical approach to materials design. Drawing on a range of authentic genre-based examples and a critical self-reflection, the intention is to highlight the impact of deficit or unbalanced needs analyses on the design of needs analysis tools, learning materials and tasks. With increasing visibility and accountability (e.g. 'impact') of much EAP provision, some of the structural and social tensions (in many UK Universities) that influence the use of deficit approaches to needs analysis and materials design will be discussed. This includes the positioning of Language Centre and EAP practitioners as educational and political 'fixers'; as 'competitors' against support services and private interests; and as

'language experts' who may or may not have a very clear or accessible articulation of language ontology, genre theories and related teaching practices. Regarding the 'practitioner as language expert', the (arguably) ethical implications of genre-based materials and learning activities that atomise language items outside of a meaningful and relevant social context are discussed. These issues relate closely to the explicit and implicit values and responsibilities of EAP practitioners (if we can broadly agree what these might be) and how these manifest at various levels of needs analysis and materials design.

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A Material Change: How AI-powered Language Tools will reconfigure priorities for EAP curriculum design

Laura Richards, University of Leeds

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EAP curriculum design is centred around the predominant forms of communication employed in Higher Education (HE) (Hyland, 2006), with written 'textual production' firmly established as the prevailing mode (Walkova, 2024). However, the changing nature of freely available digital tools, hastened (but not instigated) by the COVID-19 pandemic, will inevitably force practitioners and curriculum designers to reevaluate the ways in which we teach writing to remain effective in our practice. As Bond (2022) suggests, context is essential in EAP curriculum development to ensure the authenticity and relevance of academic communication and the content of EAP curricula has struggled to keep pace with changes in the HE landscape. The presence of AI-powered language tools (AILTs) – encompassing machine translation such as Google Translate and generative AI such as ChatGPT - is now 'an inescapable fact' (Alharbi, 2023, p.2) and academics are increasingly accepting of these tools as part of the learning experience (Groves and Mundt, 2021) with students most commonly employing them for writing (Ou et al., 2024). Rather than control their use, language practitioners should work towards understanding how students are using them and work with - rather than against - them in curriculum design (Alharbi, 2023). With the capacity of AILTs to produce ever more fluent and authentic-looking texts (Ou et al. 2024), the necessity to train students in skills such as prompt-writing and post-editing will increase, as the need to teach more traditional elements of language such as grammar and lexis may be lessened. Concurrently, assessment modes in HE are shifting away from the traditional essay towards more AI-proof tasks such as

oral presentations and even podcasts (Xia et al., 2024). I will argue for moving the dial more towards AI-tolerant skills, and interactional competence and ‘live’ communicative skills that AILTs ineffectively addresses to maintain authenticity and effectiveness of EAP.

References

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THE PRACTICE OF MATERIALS DESIGN

B1 Designing and Refining Materials 11.30-12.30

AI4LA: Creating AI EAP Materials from the Principle of Language Adjustment

Kelly Webb-Davies, University of Oxford

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Using Generative AI (genAI) to generate text from a prompt often results in poor quality and hallucinations. However, better results can be produced when using genAI based on the principle of language adjustment (AI4LA). In AI4LA the existing text and ideas are human-created, with genAI being used to refine the linguistic output, which has the added benefit of ensuring the preservation of human creativity and critical thought. AI4LA offers transformative possibilities for EAP through the design and creation of lesson materials, benefiting both students and educators. This workshop demonstrates the practical applications of AI4LA such as:

- Simplifying Language for Scaffolding: Creating accessible readings to aid in top-down processing in listening tasks.
- Personalising Materials: Creating culturally relevant, linguistically inclusive content that resonates with students' backgrounds.
- Exemplifying Academic Language: Transforming text into academic English for students to compare and evaluate.
- Differentiating Text: Providing instructions and feedback at varying complexity levels.
- Creating Quizzes and Study Aids: Using the Academic Word List (AWL) with genAI to develop study materials.

This workshop is aimed at people who already have a basic grasp of using genAI chatbots. Attendees are encouraged to bring their own laptop or smartphone with a genAI app (e.g. ChatGPT, Claude, Copilot) already installed and logged in so they can participate in hands-on activities creating and then sharing their ideas for collaborative feedback and discussion. The workshop emphasises ethical transparency in using genAI for EAP materials, and models productive genAI use for students. By integrating AI into EAP materials design, educators can address

challenges of inclusivity and adaptability, setting a new standard for innovative EAP teaching practices. Participants will leave with a deeper understanding of how to harness genAI's potential to create engaging, tailored, and effective EAP materials

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B2 Inclusive Materials Design 13.30-14.30

Critical Reflections on Designing Mobile-Optimised EAP Self-Study Materials for Students from Widening Participation Backgrounds

Dr I-Chen Hsieh, Coventry University

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This presentation offers a critical reflection on the design and development of mobile-optimised EAP self-study materials tailored for students from widening participation backgrounds in UK higher education. As many of these students rely heavily on mobile devices for learning, there is a growing need to shift from traditional desktop-centric content to mobile-friendly solutions. The presentation begins by addressing the unique challenges these learners face in higher education, such as time constraints, access to resources, and why mobile devices are often their preferred tool for accessing learning materials. It critiques current content, which is primarily designed for desktop use, and explores how this approach often fails to meet the learning needs of students engaging through mobile platforms. This sets the stage for discussing the importance of creating materials that balance accessibility, engagement, and academic rigour in mobile-first environments. The session will then delve into the application of User Experience (UX) design principles and Learning Sciences, highlighting three key areas: managing cognitive load to avoid overwhelming learners, creating learner-centred design that prioritises student needs, and using iterative improvements driven by continuous feedback. The role of student feedback in shaping the development of these materials will be a focal point, demonstrating how an iterative design process can significantly improve both accessibility and learning outcomes. By critically reflecting on the process of designing EAP materials for students from widening participation backgrounds, this session aims to offer actionable insights and practical strategies for EAP practitioners who seek to create more inclusive and effective mobile-optimised learning resources.

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Fostering Digital Accessibility Awareness in EAP Materials Design: A Collaborative Approach

Amy Aisha Brown, University of Portsmouth

Ella Ballinger, King's College London

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Making our digital EAP materials accessible is not only a legal requirement (Equality Act 2010; Accessibility Regulations 2018), but also an essential step towards inclusivity. Accessible materials strengthen opportunities for all learners – those with and without disabilities – to access, participate, and progress in their learning (CAST, 2024). In King's Foundations, having identified a gap in our implementation of this critical aspect of materials design, we have embarked on a series of collaborative initiatives between EAP practitioners and learning technologists to raise awareness and improve digital accessibility across our Foundation, Pre-session, Academic Skills, and In-session programmes. Critically reflecting on these initiatives is the focus of this presentation. Our multi-pronged approach began by securing senior leadership buy-in. This key step was followed by initiatives such as materials audits, training sessions, the adoption of technologies to support materials evaluation, and forum activities. Indicators of success include positive staff evaluations of training as well as improvements in digital content accessibility as measured by Ally, an accessibility tool integrated into our VLE. Furthermore, we see evidence of a positive cultural shift; for instance, teaching staff, rather than learning technologists, are increasingly leading on the topic. Despite these achievements, challenges persist, particularly reverse-engineering inaccessible content, conflicting priorities, and a scarcity of resources outlining strategies to make EAP content accessible. Our future plans include gathering student feedback, conducting further audits, and expanding staff training. However, given some of the more sticky challenges (especially conflicting priorities), we conclude that more institutional support is necessary if we are to move on from awareness-raising and on to embedding digital accessibility at the heart of materials design, a necessary shift if we are to create genuinely inclusive EAP materials. We welcome your feedback on our approach and look forward to hearing how you are tackling these challenges in your own context.

References

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B3 Writing Materials Design 14.45-15.45

Using student samples in in-session materials design: challenges and tensions

Debra Jones, University of Bristol

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The Centre for Academic Language & Development at the University of Bristol has a large in-session programme for undergraduate and postgraduate students, both home and international. Using the CEM model (Sloan & Porter, 2009), our sessions are Contextualised, Embedded and Mapped to the programme and aim to help students understand and meet expectations. We draw on the Intended Learning Outcomes of the programme, assignment task briefs, subject lecturer feedback and samples of previous student writing. The use of student writing samples from genres students need to produce, along with feedback, is a key element of discipline-specific academic language and literacy provision (Tribble & Wingate, 2013). Sample analysis can help students understand expectations as well as recognising features of academic writing in their discipline (Smyth & Carless, 2021). Sample analysis can also be used to facilitate an SFL approach (Halliday, 1978) with students identifying the language used to achieve particular functions or ‘moves’ (Swales, 1990) in a text. Comparing a range of samples can emphasise the linguistic choices that individual writers make and the effect of these on the reader. This presentation introduces an approach to in-session materials design which aims to raise awareness of disciplinary and genre conventions while emphasising language as choice (Monbec, 2020). Samples are used as the basis for identifying language and organisational features rather than presenting pre-defined features and looking for these in samples. This is a less prescriptive approach, avoiding the idea of ‘rules’ and a ‘correct’ way to write. Instead, students notice the language choices made and the effect on the reader and develop their understanding of the features of writing in their discipline and the choices available to them. The presentation shares examples of materials created using this approach, highlighting successes and some of the challenges, both practical and pedagogical of using student samples.

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Swales, J. M. (1990). *Genre analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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Use your own words: Questioning EAP materials on paraphrasing

Dr Milada Walková, University of Leeds

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Paraphrasing is an essential skill for successful academic writing. This presentation will illustrate and question common formalistic approaches to teaching paraphrasing, which are pervasive in EAP materials (e.g. Bailey, 2018). First, since paraphrasing is typically presented as a strategy to avoid plagiarism, students might not see paraphrasing as adopting ideas of others for their own purposes in writing. This is further reinforced by exercises in which students are asked to paraphrase any sentence from a text. As a result, “students are not writing from sources; they are writing from sentences selected from sources”, as Howard, Serviss and Rodrigue (2010, p.188, original italics) point out. Second, EAP materials commonly distinguish

between paraphrasing and summarising. I argue that this distinction is not only unhelpful in expressing ideas from sources in students' own words, but it might also impede synthesising sources. Third, EAP materials on paraphrasing often present techniques for paraphrasing such as using synonyms and changing the word order. However, the materials typically do not consider these techniques within a stretch of text. I will show that these techniques might negatively impact the writer's text in terms of coherence and formality. Finally, I problematise the frequent advice to students telling them to use their own words, as it seemingly clashes with the use of prefabricated chunks (cf. Sinclair, 1991). This presentation will propose that students should be taught not to paraphrase sentences but to paraphrase ideas, that effective teaching of paraphrasing should include encouraging students to select ideas from sources and to adapt these to fit their own purposes in writing and their text. I will present examples of materials on paraphrasing based on these principles. I will reflect on their effectiveness and propose areas for further scholarship.

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