

The Missing Part of the Student Profile Jigsaw

**Academic skills advising for Australian tertiary
students from non-English speaking backgrounds**

**Edited by
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INTRODUCTION

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The Missing Part of the Student Profile Jigsaw: Academic skills advising for Australian tertiary students from non-English speaking backgrounds has as its genesis a small pilot project undertaken by the Academic Skills and Learning Centre at the Australian National University in 1998. The Centre's role within the University mirrors that of academic skills and learning advisers nationally—to provide academic skills and learning assistance to all enrolled students such that they are encouraged to contribute equally to, and benefit equally from, the skills and knowledge available at tertiary level. Academic Skills Advisers—also known as Language and Academic Skills (LAS) Advisers—work in most universities/tertiary institutes as either general or academic staff. Within this context, our role as advisers is to identify and address the changing needs of tertiary students in respect of their academic skills and learning. This requires us to develop an awareness of the diversity of the student population and to devise appropriate interventions. Practice varies nationally, but commonly our work involves individual consultations and discipline-specific courses, workshops and programs, preferably working in collaboration with academic teaching staff.

Students may arrive at our doors, or be referred to us, because of one or more of a huge range of issues including academic expectations (e.g., what do 'they' want?), academic processes and procedures (e.g., time management, search and research strategies), producing different academic genres (e.g., book reviews, theses, sub-theses, research proposals) or participating in the intellectual life of the institution (e.g., giving tutorial or seminar presentations). Thus, our role is to assist students in understanding expectations, processes and products. This is not remedial work—few new students would understand how to produce a briefing paper or physics portfolio the first time they are asked to do so, quite apart from knowing how a law tort paper or laboratory report would differ from an essay. We assist students in understanding the cultures, purposes and conventions of different written genres. Our work is not, therefore, remedial—we

don't 'fix' problems—rather, we teach students the learning strategies and skills with which they can achieve the outcomes they want. This objective of teaching students how to take control of their academic writing is fundamental to our pedagogic philosophy.

This work challenges us to encompass the needs of students from all cultural backgrounds and educational experiences. This book focuses on one particular category of students, Australian students from non-English speaking backgrounds (ANESBs). With these students, we need to address their academic skills and learning needs within the context of second language issues, differing cultural backgrounds and differing educational experiences. With Australian students of English speaking background, all sorts of assumptions can be made about their understanding of academics' expectations, prior knowledge and educational experiences—although those assumptions are not always borne out.

With ANESB students, it is not possible to assume that they share this common grounding. Our task working with ANESB students on particular academic tasks is to explicitly address issues relating to the tertiary culture, the disciplinary cultures and the assumptions about what is expected. Such work is complicated by the ever present assumption of both students and academics that "English is the problem", when in fact different factors could well be impacting on the students' work—different understandings about focus, reasoning, research, attitudes towards knowledge and so on.

A small meeting of ANU academic staff in late 1997 raised concerns about the academic difficulties that ANESB undergraduates were experiencing, and aimed to identify strategies to meet their needs. The difficulty in discussion was, firstly, the lack of clarity in definition—ANESB students were often mistakenly equated with international students—and, secondly, the lack of concrete data about their distribution across the campus and information about how they conceptualised their academic needs.

The Academic Skills and Learning Centre therefore undertook a small pilot research project which had three aims: to research the ANESB undergraduate cohort on campus in order to find out where and what students were studying; to gain some insight into their academic performance; and to investigate their particular academic needs so that appropriate academic and learning assistance could be implemented. This seemed a simple enough task. The study did not investigate ANESB's access to university, as Australians of non-English speaking backgrounds are not under-represented in tertiary education, as Dobson, Birrell and Rapson (1996) have confirmed.

At the time, ANESB students were classified as an equity group and the University's equity guidelines, in line with those of the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA), were quite clear:

'good equity practice' exists when there is an understanding of the present and potential student population of the university; the university has a student-centred approach to teaching and learning that emphasises the identification of, and response to, the needs of students.

It seemed quite straightforward then, that in order to achieve good equity practice on campus for this particular group, there needed to be a clear analysis of the group, its needs and how the university could best provide appropriate strategies in response to those needs.

The DETYA definition of ANESBs was restricted to those who were born overseas and arrived in Australia less than ten years ago, and who spoke a language other than English at home. However, we were not able to identify ANESB students on the ANU campus by those criteria, as the only available tool was optional self-disclosure on the student's enrolment form, in response to the question "Are you from a non-English speaking background?"¹. Thus arose the first difficulty—the administrative tools were not sufficiently precise to be used with absolute confidence. We were confident that international students were not included in the data capture, but the undifferentiated nature of self-disclosure caused problems: non-disclosure, non-differentiation between second language background and second language spoken, non-differentiation between first and second generation, and no clear indication, in many cases, of whether the student had been in Australia for longer than ten years.

The only thing we could be certain of was that the identification tools were problematic, and quite possibly, the number of ANESB undergraduates on campus was higher than that recorded. A database was compiled, aggregating data on language background, location and academic performance. A survey (15 per cent return) was sent out requesting information on respondents' perceptions of the pressures they experienced; how and with whom they solved problems; the most difficult aspect of academic work encountered; and whether they perceived that their academic ability/performance had changed over time.

1. Current University Admission Centre forms have since developed the question to include information on citizenship, place of birth, year of arrival and permanent residence, and language spoken at home.

A key finding in terms of academic performance—albeit not necessarily robust—was the fact that, although ANESB students tended to match Faculty credit averages, they tended to be under-represented in the Distinction/High Distinction grades, and over-represented in the Fail/Pass grades.

The percentage of N (Fail) and Not Completed Fail (NCN) for ANESB undergraduates was double that of the wider undergraduate community. These findings were in line with similar research at the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) by Wapshere (1996; 1997) which found that ANESB students were not achieving the same outcomes as native speakers.

Although many of the academic difficulties reported by the survey respondents appeared similar to those of native speakers, a common theme was that the difficulties were magnified because of the filter of non-English speaking background. Students were having difficulties with exams, writing, reading, research, and tutorial discussions and presentations where having English as a *first* language was clearly an advantage. What also emerged from the study was the notion that ANESB students do not want to be treated differently—rather they want their difficulties constructively acknowledged. The question then for us as LAS advisers was how best to acknowledge their difficulties.

One solution in our work at the ANU was to introduce a stand-alone, Centre organised, discipline-specific five-hour induction for ANESB students in the Faculty with the highest concentration of ANESB students. Only eight students attended—out of approximately 180 targeted—despite the fact that there was an obvious need for what we offered. In response our second solution was to collaborate with a lecturer to provide shorter, more sustained discipline-specific workshops—four in all. Each two-hour workshop addressed particular ANESB academic needs within the disciplinary context. An open invitation was issued to all students. Each workshop attracted over 250 students. It appeared that embedding academic skills and learning into the curriculum was a much more successful strategy.

Despite the success of the second solution to meeting the needs of ANESB students, more questions were raised than were answered. Some questions were definitional and related to sources of information and the research tools used: *How does one define an ANESB student; What happens if they do not self-identify (should we assume they don't need 'help?'); What sources of information are used to track ANESB students and their location?* Other questions related to professional practice as academic skills and learning advisers: *Can we generalise about ANESB students' academic needs? If they have needs, are their needs to be identified on linguistic, cultural and/or educational bases?* Some questions

related to professional strategy: If we target ANESB students as an equity group and they do not attend, does this mean they do not wish to be labelled? Are we providing what they want? And if we target them within the context of the discipline cohort and they do attend in numbers, should ANESB students not be 'mainstreamed' in terms of the provision of academic skills and learning skills? Indeed, what is known and assumed about 'the mainstream'?

In late 2000 the Centre had the opportunity to bring together for two days a small group of academic skills and learning advisers to discuss these issues and to share their professional practice. There were three simple aims: to raise awareness of ANESB students and their academic needs; to provide an update on ways of working with ANESB students; and to provide insights into what characterises best practice in terms of providing the most effective academic and learning skills.

The workshop centred on eight key areas: sources of information; sources of confusion; modes of delivery; technology; relations with students; relations with academics; and institutional issues. In each area, participants asked the questions: What needs to be known/changed/developed in order to improve the provision of academic skills assistance to ANESB students? Each participant was required to speak to a particular issue/set of issues either from their own institutional context or more broadly. The participants were not necessarily 'experts' in working with ANESB students, but all had at least five years' professional experience in academic skills and learning advising. The intention was that, in addressing the central questions, participants might simply raise issues, seek advice, or describe their professional practice—what had/had not worked, or what they would like to try.

The Workshop was coordinated by Annie Bartlett of the Academic Skills and Learning Centre, ANU. Participants included all ASLC staff, as well as representatives from the Language & Learning Service, Advisory Centre for University Education, University of Adelaide; the Humanities Academic Skills Unit at La Trobe University; the Learning Assistance Unit, University of Queensland; the Learning Centre, University of Western Sydney; the English Language Program, University of Wollongong; the Education Development Unit, Faculty of Commerce and Economics, UNSW; the Concurrent English Support Service for International Students, RMIT Business, Melbourne; the Academic Skills Adviser, Australian Defence Force Academy, UNSW; and the Academic Skills Program, University of Canberra.

The two days spent presenting, discussing, and reflecting on the provision of academic skills to a particular group of students offered a rare opportunity: there is very little time at conferences, on e-mail and in passing to come

to grips with what is important, what works, and what needs to be done in respect of a particular issue. One of the clearest overall needs to emerge from the workshop was the need to disseminate what we had gained. Thus, this book is an account of our professional practice and reflections with respect to working with ANESB students. We hope that it will be useful to various groups by informing fellow academic skills and learning advisers about how colleagues are grappling with issues, and offering ideas for how they might enhance their practice; and by informing other academics about the kind of work we do, and the dilemmas it poses. If it clarifies some of the complexities of their student profile, that will be a reward in itself. Finally, almost all of what is addressed in this work has implications for institutional best practice: the better we understand the academic skills and learning needs of ANESB students, and respond to them constructively, the better the institution. In addressing this book to readers in all these areas, we hope, most importantly, to contribute to their work with ANESB students by providing a deeper understanding of these students' academic skills and learning needs.

In the chapters that follow, a recurring issue is whether academic assistance should target ANESBs as a separate category needing separate classes in language and academic skills, or whether it is more effective to integrate this kind of assistance into the mainstream classes in the disciplines. The dilemma arises because, it seemed to us, ANESB students have been, up to this point, an invisible piece of the jigsaw that makes up each university's student profile. Universities have thought of their students as being divided into a native mainstream and an international cohort; if this is the case, it makes sense to offer special help to the international students, who are easily identified, outside the context of their subjects. The workshop participants found, however, that ANESBs overlap both categories, in complex ways which are teased out by Kate Chanock and Margaret Cargill in Chapter 1. We need therefore to be aware of the difficulties and strategies that they share with international students, and to take these into account in our work with ANESBs, as Kate Wilson discusses in Chapter 2. We need also to identify the difficulties they share with more traditional Australian students, and devise integrated approaches to help every student with these as a regular part of their studies. Kate Chanock looks at this approach in Chapter 3, and in Chapter 4 Sandra Gollin examines the advantages and disadvantages which online delivery of teaching offers all students, including ANESB students.

While LAS advisers' role is chiefly to work with students, there are other avenues we should explore in our efforts to improve their experience at university. We need to share what we know about our students' needs with our academic colleagues in the disciplines, who teach them in their

subjects; and we need also to influence policy at the institutional level. In Chapter 5, Kate Chanock looks at ways of improving our communications with lecturers in the disciplines, while Chapter 6 closes the book with some thoughts on institutional responsibilities and approaches to LAS provision.

This book is very much the sum of its parts, and a work in progress. It captures the thoughts of a group of LAS advisers brought together for two days to address the academic skills and learning needs of ANESB students in tertiary institutions. The major achievements of those two days were to recognise, first, that the difficulties we, as LAS advisers, experience are common to others; and second, that sharing information about practice leads to better practice. We hope this publication provides readers with some reassurance that they are not alone in confronting the challenges of working with diversity, and with some new ideas for practice.

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WHO ARE AUSTRALIAN NON-ENGLISH-SPEAKING-BACKGROUND (ANESB) STUDENTS AND HOW DO THEY DIFFER FROM OTHER STUDENTS?

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Introduction

The student category Australian non-English speaking background (ANESB) is a broad one and can be interpreted in several different ways, but it does not include full-fee paying international students. Despite this distinction, however, much of the published material investigating the needs of NESB students, and suggesting measures to assist their learning, focuses most clearly on international students. An unfortunate aspect of this situation is that academics in the disciplines often tend to conflate the situation and needs of international students with those of ANESB students (e.g., Ryan & Zuber-Skerritt, 1999). In fact, one of the reasons for holding the workshop on which this publication is based was a desire to clarify who ANESB students are, how we encounter them in our various university settings, and what we know of their needs and how to address them effectively. It is important to emphasise that we are not discussing access to higher education here; as Dobson, Birrell, & Rapson (1996) point out, ANESB students as a group participate in higher education at a higher rate than their representation in the wider community. Rather, our focus is on identifying and meeting the needs of students who have gained access to university study and helping them achieve successful outcomes.

In view of the differences between universities in terms of the make-up of their student bodies, it is unlikely that a standard approach to defining ANESB students or addressing their needs is either feasible or wise. In some universities they may be a small and easily identifiable group, and may see themselves as distinct and in need of distinctive kinds of help. On the other hand, in many universities, ANESB students are numerous and diverse, and do not see themselves as different from the mainstream. While they have

some problems that ESB students do not have—of which they may or may not be aware—they also share with them many of the common problems of understanding university demands. Nor have they any reason to think that they will have special needs, if they have graduated from the local school system and gone through the usual application process. A good deal of work is needed, both to identify the spectrum of needs within each institution, and to understand how they may best be met. In this chapter we discuss the issues of definition; analyse the ANESB cohort in three different Australian universities, and in one large Faculty of another; and present a spectrum of student needs for learning assistance. In view of the diversity revealed by this analysis, we argue for the importance of local action and research on the dimensions of the issue in each university context, to provide a sound base for decisions about how learning assistance should be provided and targeted.

Defining ANESB

There are at least three ways in which ANESB can be defined. The first way uses the DETYA definition: a permanent resident/citizen who speaks a language other than English at home and who has arrived in Australia within the last ten years. This delineates the ANESB students who belong to the equity group, as designated by DETYA, whose participation in higher education is to be systematically encouraged. The second, broader definition includes people who are Australian citizens or permanent residents and identify themselves as speaking a language other than English at home. This includes people who have been living in Australia for any length of time, often for much longer than ten years. A further category widens the definition to include those for whom English may be their first or only language now, but who began life with a different first language or whose parents speak a language other than English. It is difficult to identify the distribution of these people in a given population, so they will not figure largely in the discussion that follows, although language and academic skills advisers meet a fair number of them in individual consultations. It is also not clear how many people who speak a language other than English at home fail to self identify. The difficulty of interpreting students' self-reporting in this area is evident when we consider that, of the 92,175 non-international students in Australia in 1998 who spoke a language other than English at home, only 28,337 "classified themselves as [A]NESB students" (Purdie, 2000, p. 115).

Numerical data

Investigating the profiles of specific universities in terms of these categories may serve to show how complex may be the situations we are planning for. The discussion presented here, using data from La Trobe, Adelaide,

the Australian National University (ANU) and the University of New South Wales (UNSW), reflects the different types of information available at the various sites, and reinforces the call made by Isaac (1993) for the collection of data in appropriately disaggregated forms that will enable more useful investigations of ANESB issues.

La Trobe University in Victoria had an enrolment of 19, 276 in 2000 (figures are from the university's Management Information Unit). Here, the ANESB equity group comprises a minority of the ANESB students enrolled, and the data on this group do not suggest that they are disadvantaged. Their retention rate is about the same as that of other students (the ratio is 0.973), as is their success rate (in terms of subjects passed; unlike the situation at the ANU, La Trobe's figures do not distinguish between levels of marks attained by different groups). This is lower than other students' success rates in some subject areas, but higher in others. Nor is this inconsistent with the national figures, which show that ANESB students' success is 0.96 of other students' nationally (La Trobe University Equity and Access Unit).

La Trobe's figures for all ANESBs show that approximately 12% of students speak a language other than English (LOTE) at home, but of these, only 18% are in the equity group. Fifty-three percent are excluded because they were born here, and of the remainder, 61%, are excluded because they arrived more than ten years previously. This means that only 39% of first generation ANESB migrant students are in the equity group, and they comprise only 2% of the student body as a whole. Most equity group students are enrolled in Science (135; 4.4% of total enrolment), followed by Business/ Economics (95; 2.9%) and Humanities/Social Sciences (84; 1.3%).

Adelaide University had a 1999 enrolment of 14,485, of which about 11,100 were undergraduates (figures from the university's Student Information System). The equity group (413 students) made up 2.9% of the undergraduate population and 2.6% of the postgraduate numbers—2.85% overall. In contrast to this small proportion of equity group students, the broader category including less recent ANESB migrants accounted for 1478 students (with 72 home languages): 10.6% undergraduates and 8.8% postgraduates, 10.2% overall. Thus, only 27.9% of students who identify as ANESB are captured by the equity group statistics.

In terms of faculties and schools where the students clustered, there are some differences in rank order depending on which measure is used. Using the equity group figures, Engineering had most ANESB undergraduate students (61), followed by Humanities and Social Sciences (50), but using self-identification more students were located in Humanities and Social Sciences (220 vs 199 for Engineering). Commerce and Economics are in

separate schools at Adelaide; if their figures are combined, they rank third using either measure.

The ANU had an undergraduate enrolment of about 9,500 in 1998 (Bartlett and Ballard, 1998). Of these, 482 (5%) had self-identified as ANESB on their enrolment forms (category 2). Over 50 home languages were represented. These students were clustered in the departments of Commerce, Economics and Statistics, followed by Information Science and Computing, Law and Political Science.

In terms of academic results, ANESB students tended to be under-represented at the High Distinction/Distinction levels and over-represented at the Pass and Fail levels, but they tended to match Faculty Credit averages. The percentage of Fail and Not Completed Fail for ANESBs was double that of the wider undergraduate community. Thus, there appears to be reason for concern in terms of equality of outcome for ANESB students in this context.

For UNSW, the situation has been researched for one faculty only, Commerce and Economics. According to Ramburuth and Mason (2000), 35% of the students in this faculty are international full-fee paying, and 60% of the total number speak a language other than English at home. Thus, category 2 makes up around 25% of the student population in this faculty (no figures are given for the equity group in this paper).

In summary, not all the information we require to describe and compare the ANESB cohorts fully is readily available across all the institutions discussed here. The DETYA equity group figures are likely to capture only a small proportion of the total (e.g., 27.9% for Adelaide and 18% for La Trobe). What can be stated is that the percentage of self-identified ANESB students enrolled varies from 5% at ANU (undergraduates only), through 10.2% for Adelaide and 12% for La Trobe, to 25% for the Faculty of Commerce and Economics at UNSW. With such large differences from one institution to the next, it seems unwise to try to generalise across the board. In terms of identifying and meeting students' needs, local solutions are clearly needed.

Unpacking the needs of ANESB students

This snapshot suggests that we must look at each local situation on its own terms, to discover whether and in what sense ANESB students are disadvantaged. This is not simply a matter of reading the figures for marks or completions, for although these can indicate the relative success of different categories of student, they cannot tell us much about their experience. Where the figures for ANESBs match those for the mainstream, the figures may be masking disadvantage faced by students who work hard

and successfully to overcome initial obstacles. On the other hand, it may be that the 'mainstream' students face obstacles of their own. As Purdie says: "Initiatives that have led to the expansion of the student profile in higher education in recent years have meant that there is a growing number of local students who experience similar problems to NESB international students with respect to their preparation for university study" (2000, p. 119). Cultural congruence with the academy, and facility in the language of instruction, cannot be assumed for *any* student, whether migrant or local in origin. A national survey conducted in 1994 found that 63.5% of students were from families in which neither parent had a university degree (McInnis & James, 1995). Even within the migrant category, it is possible that more problems are experienced by ANESB students who arrived in the period before the equity group, even though they have had longer to learn the language. More recent arrivals may do better because they have been to school in Australia; or because they have been to school more recently; because they are not juggling other responsibilities; or because they have to meet high expectations on the part of their parents, who moved from their homeland in search of better opportunities for their children.

Thus, although the equity group numbers enrolled are not large, the experience of language and academic skills advisers suggests that there are many more students from migrant backgrounds who could benefit from help with academic skills. Many of the students who choose La Trobe University, for example, are from longer-established migrant communities; and while only 12% of the student body say they speak a Language other than English (LOTE) at home, this does not mean that English was the first language of the remainder, only that it is now their dominant language.

The needs of students with language backgrounds other than English are not well understood, but we know at least that they are very diverse, as the following breakdown would suggest. At one end of the spectrum, among first generation ANESB students, we have slightly older students, educated in their own country. With varying initial competency in English, they are often quick to understand, confident, and keen to extend their command of English. Moreover, they often have some understanding of how language works, and some linguistic metalanguage with which build on this. In these respects, they are comparable with international students, but not identical. While international students must meet an English requirement to be admitted, permanent residents do not have to demonstrate any specific level of competence in English, and sometimes start with less. On the other hand, those who have studied in Australian language centres are more familiar with Australian culture and with local norms of teaching and learning.

A more assimilated group are young students who came through the English as a second language (ESL) stream at matriculation. They come, often, with considerable intellectual promise, but with a command of English that needs further development if they are to meet the demands of university reading and writing. In the ESL stream, a little more credit is given for ideas, a little less for control of the language; and while this emphasis enables deserving students to enter university, it can mean that they struggle when they get there.

A third component of first generation ANESBs are young students who were completely mainstreamed at school. They converse in fluent vernacular English, and they have academic English as well. However, like native speakers educated in Australian secondary schools, they do not have a great deal of knowledge about language; nor have they much metalanguage with which to seek more.

At the other end of the spectrum are the longest established, but least well prepared, students in the first generation. These are older students who have not completed secondary school, but have been admitted into university by a "special entry" process. They often have a firmly fossilised vernacular and lack the metalanguage to talk about it, beyond expressing an anxiety about the stigma of "bad English".

Some of each of these types of student are in the equity group, while others are not; clearly, with such a mix, it is difficult to generalise about the problems and issues specific to the equity group alone. If we broaden our enquiry to consider the rest of the ANESB students enrolled, the picture becomes still more complex. The many second-generation ANESB students are in some ways more at risk. If recent migrants are having difficulties, it is understood from their accents that they are on unfamiliar ground, and tutors are likely to make allowances. Moreover, the students themselves can understand their problems in terms of language and cultural differences of which they are conscious, so that they are not necessarily led to doubt their own ability. Second generation students, however, are not recognised in this way, but they have some of the same problems (e.g., errors resulting from language transfer at an earlier time, such as unidiomatic prepositions; or limited vocabulary development in English because much of their home discourse is in the parents' language). They also often share the experiences of native speakers whose families have no prior experience of higher education. These include lack of confidence, low expectations of their own performance, limited understanding of university culture, and a lack of fluency in academic English. Compared with a refugee from a highly educated family with a "cultured" self-concept, these students are more at risk. They may not even participate in higher education at a rate

comparable to their representation in the community, if they come from Italian, Macedonian or Turkish language backgrounds (Dobson et al., 1996). In fact, Dobson et al. (1996) provide data to support a case for the government to widen the equity group definition "to include all people from a non-English-speaking background regardless of birthplace or recency of arrival".

The myth of the unproblematic "mainstream"

This suggestion, however, would preserve a distinction between the equity group and the "mainstream" that often does not fit the reality. The assumption that ANESB students form a group that will be more at risk than the "mainstream" is severely challenged by the trajectories of individuals. This was demonstrated dramatically in a week when one of us (Chanock) saw, in one-to-one consultations, a young Kurdish woman and a young Anglo-Celtic man, each asking for advice on a draft of a History essay.

The young woman, whose second language was Russian (English was her third), was writing on Nazi propaganda during the Second World War, and her essay showed a strong grasp of the topic and a well-informed, well-developed argument. The writing was sophisticated, and indeed the only advice she needed was to do with the past perfect tense and a couple of unidiomatic expressions. The essay would have got an A with or without advice, although the student was surprised to hear this, as she was worried that, being a recent arrival, she might not be up to the standard of work expected.

The young man, on the other hand, was barely afloat after a semester and a half at university. The assignment he brought in was a website critique, done for a subject in European Studies. It involved going to any website on the Balkans (several were suggested in the course guide), establishing its provenance, summarising its content, and assessing its reliability and usefulness. This student had gone to the website of the Fourth International (the World Socialist Web Site), which rang no bells with him. He did not ask himself, "Fourth International of What?" Nor did he have the cultural knowledge to recognize the pejorative use of words like "imperialist" or "aggressive" in the text (after all, in Australian sport or business, "aggressive" is considered a good thing to be). His summary said that the authors of the site felt that things had got so bad in the Balkans that imperialist intervention was needed, and had come not a moment too soon. I called up the site on my office computer and showed him that this was a Communist website and asked whether he might read the material differently once he was aware of that. He did not seem to think so, and I think he simply does not have the necessary 'cultural lens' for viewing it. A look at some of the material from this site may illustrate the problem:

WSWS: News & Analysis: Europe: The Balkan Crisis
Europe's plan to control the Balkans
By Chris Marsden, 22 June 1999

A determined push is being made by Europe to dominate the Balkans in the aftermath of the war. Yesterday the Blair government organised a second meeting to encourage and organise bids by British construction firms and consultants for the rebuilding of Kosovo, worth an estimated £3 billion. Contracts for the entire Balkan region are estimated to be worth £30 billion. The pattern is being repeated throughout Europe. To the same end in Germany, the Schröder government is setting up a task force involving ministries and private firms. An industry executive told the Guardian, "Germans are traditionally the biggest trading partners with ex-Yugoslavia and the Balkans as a whole and, last year, trade amounted to DM25.8 billion. This region needs the reconstruction of its entire infrastructure, energy, transport, telecoms. In all these branches German industry is internationally competitive and we think we are in a position to deliver."

If you are not alert to the resonance of "push" and "dominate" here, it sounds as if the Balkans are to get a generous helping hand from Western Europe. The same applies to the website's quotations of material from the Centre for European Policy Studies' (CEPS) document "A System for Post-War South-East Europe: Plan for Reconstruction, Openness, Development and Integration". The author tells us:

The document represents an aggressive assertion of European imperialist interests, which envisages the transformation of the entire region into an EU protectorate. It notes that "NATO has been performing an indispensable task, deploying military force to try to stop the crimes against humanity. But as the military action ends the civilian order will have to be built up, and here the European Union must assume its responsibilities". (http://www.wsws.org/articles/1999/jun1999/euro-j22_prn.shtml. Accessed 8/12/2000)

It is not that there is no authorial commentary on the quoted passages; indeed, the author describes NATO's activities in the area as a "takeover", and the proposed government as a "dictatorship". A reader would have to be very unsophisticated indeed to take in the face value of the quotations, without understanding that they were presented as evidence of the cynical exploitation of the conflict in the Balkans by capitalist Europe. But this is just the point: this student is a very unsophisticated reader, and lacks both the cultural background and the grasp of English (which is his native and only tongue) to understand the reading he must do in his course. He, and

not the migrant, is in the position that we anticipate that many migrant students may be in. The complex distribution of “preparedness” in this student profile suggests that we would do well to look at mainstream measures that will help everybody – not because ANESB students are not at risk, but because others are too.

Conclusion

The questions surrounding better practice for ANESB students evidently extend beyond any clearly delimited student group. Some ANESB students overlap, in terms of knowledge, skills, and needs, with international students from non-English speaking backgrounds, while others overlap with ESB students of similar socio-economic status. A needs continuum that runs on a single dimension from NESB to ESB does not capture the issues; this requires a more multi-dimensional analysis which can account for many of the variables we have discussed above. This complexity, particularly combined with the funding constraints currently operating in the higher education sector, is a strong incentive for mainstreaming as much language and academic skills assistance as possible. This is because it is not efficient to offer targeted help to different groups, divided by language background, if many of the problems they face are common ones. It is, moreover, particularly inefficient when many students do not see themselves as needing special academic help and will not come to optional sessions, even if they are offered and would in fact be useful. However, a cautionary note needs to be sounded. Just because of the complexity of the ANESB group and their needs, a careful eye would need to be kept on the effectiveness of various mainstreaming approaches for various categories of ANESBs—and indeed for other students.

This kind of systematic investigation has not been common in the LAS field, but may be necessary in the future to help enlist support for measures we believe will be beneficial for our students. Such studies would be a contribution the LAS profession could offer to higher education more generally, and one we are in a peculiarly strong position to provide. We have access to students one-to-one in a context which enables us to document their particular problems, and we are in a position to generalise from these professional encounters. Research could focus on whether correlations are apparent between particular types of difficulty and particular student characteristics, either those collected for DETYA in our university’s enrolment forms (country of birth, year of arrival and language spoken at home) (Dobson et al., 1996), or others we could identify and record ourselves. Similarly, when mainstream LAS interventions are trailed and evaluated, results could be analysed to show whether students of ANESB

found them more or less useful than other students, or achieved outcomes that matched or differed from those of other groups. Cross-institution comparisons could further clarify the relationships that emerge.

Future developments aside, what we can say with clarity at the end of this discussion is that, from whatever perspective we think about meeting the needs of ANESB students—what is equitable, what is feasible, what is efficient, what is effective—both figures and experience point to local solutions, responding to diverse and changing constellations of students with both unique and overlapping needs. The chapters that follow present some of the local solutions developed by workshop participants in their own contexts, as well as drawing out principles and theoretical perspectives which can prompt us to consider our own local contexts afresh.

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CHAPTER 2

ASSISTING ANESB STUDENTS TO ACQUIRE ACADEMIC LANGUAGE SKILLS

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Introduction

Various pressures may discourage learning advisers from focusing on the specific language difficulties of ANESB students. The statistics indicate that ANESB students are faring pretty well in the university context: on average the success ratio of ANESB students is 0.96, not far below native speaker students (DETYA, 1999). Participation rates are also high—13.2% of ANESB students between the age of 18 and 27 are participating in tertiary education, as opposed to 12.7% of ESB residents (Dobson, Birrell & Rapson, 1996). For this reason, Hawthorne (1999, p.51) argues against an over-emphasis on the "dysfunctionality" of ANESB students. Indeed, such an emphasis can lead to a kind of witch-hunt against 'bad' English, 'poor' grammar, and 'plagiarism', none of which are central to the core business of studying at university: coming to understand and analyse ideas, and engaging with the essential debates of the discipline. However, the broad brush nature of such statistics fails to differentiate between those ANESB students who can cope easily with their study and those for whom language is a serious hurdle.

In fact, a substantial body of research supports the notion that language does indeed cause difficulties for many ANESB students. Providing well-targeted assistance for such students is, therefore, an important goal for LAS advisers. In this chapter I discuss the extent to which language skills affect ANESB students' performance, and suggest that the outcome of insufficient language competence is that students tend to use "compensation strategies" (Adamson, 1993) which have the effect of enabling them to pass, but which limit their academic development. Finally, I discuss the role of LAS advisers in helping ANESB students to develop more effective academic and language skills and I argue that, while discipline-based literacy programs are an important part of LAS work, ANESB students may also benefit from generic programs.

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How does language affect ANESB students' performance?

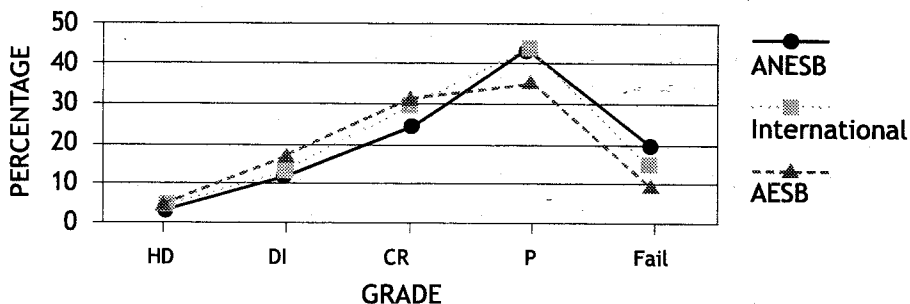
The performance statistics quoted above showing ANESB students' apparent academic success are misleading in two respects. First, ANESB students tend to be overly represented at the "pass" end of the spectrum. For example, Figure 1 shows the distribution of grades in one semester at the University of Canberra. A similar result was found in a study by Bartlett & Ballard (1998) at the Australian National University. As many ANESB students are prepared to work exceptionally hard in order to achieve their goals, these statistics suggest that ANESB students may be underachieving in comparison to the amount of effort they expend. Second, the statistics do not highlight the individual difficulties that some ANESB students experience. It seems to be the case that, while language difficulties may affect all ANESB students to some extent, a few students may face much more serious difficulties. Those ANESB students who have had little schooling in Australia, for example, may be less experienced in using academic English.

It is difficult to measure, in positivist terms, to what extent language ability affects academic performance. Language tests tend to be unreliable predictors of students' academic performance. Predictive validity studies of the IELTS (International English Language Testing System), for example, have not been conclusive (Cotton & Conrow, 1998). One problem is that language tests may not test authentic academic language skills. It is also hard to control for other variables that affect academic success: motivation, for example.

Nevertheless, several studies highlight the disparity between the academic English language competence of ESB and NESB students, although most of these studies do not differentiate between international NESB students and ANESB students. For example, Mulligan & Kirkpatrick (1998) in a study at Curtin University found that less than one in ten NESB students felt that they understood lectures very well, and more than 25% reported that they could not understand much at all. Among the linguistic factors that were problematic for them were: being unable to pick out main ideas, not understanding key terms, and the time involved in listening, comprehending and processing content. Another study by Farrell et al. (1992) with a sample of 336 undergraduates—101 NESB and 235 ESB students—studying Social Sciences at the University of Technology Sydney, found that 67% of NESB as opposed to 13% ESB students were below the minimal response rate on an academic reading comprehension test developed by the Australian Centre for Educational Research. The NESB students were particularly weak in identifying logical relationships: ESB students had a mean maximum score of 81% in identifying logical relationships, as opposed to 59% for NESB students. In terms of writing, lecturers claim that they are generally more concerned

with content than grammatically correct expression (Bush, 1995). However, Campbell (1990) in a study of 30 college students' compositions in Anthropology at the University of California, Los Angeles, found that NESB students' compositions were graded 12% lower than ESB students. Of course, the ability to express content coherently depends on complex linguistic abilities.

Figure 1: Distribution of grades among ANESB, AESB and international students at the University of Canberra in semester 1, 2000



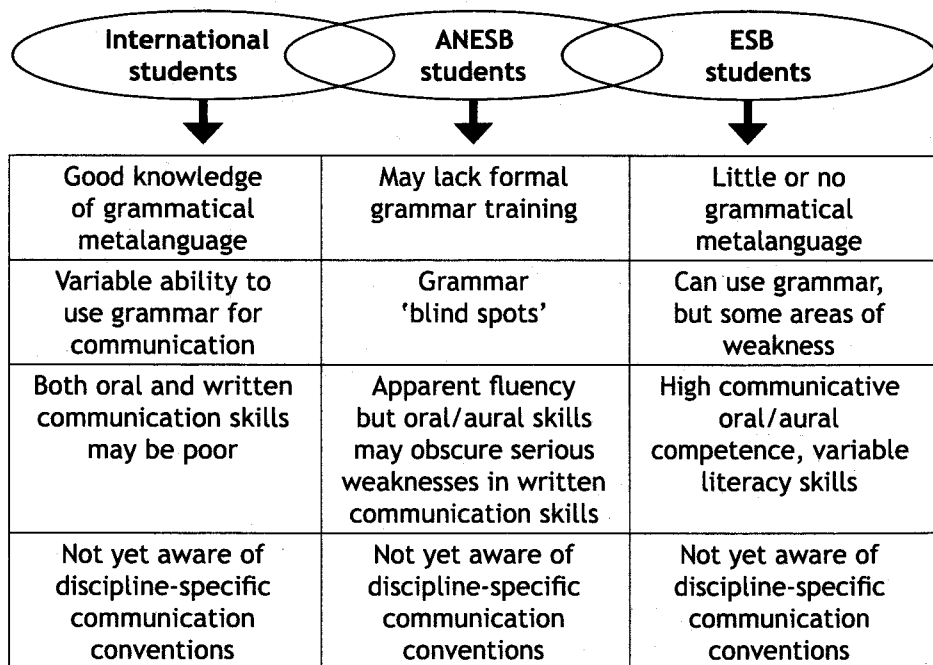
Qualitative studies also show a strong connection between English language skills and the difficulties faced by some ANESB students. For example, in my own study of note-taking in the academic writing process of non-native speakers, I characterised three of my six NESB subjects as 'mute outsiders' to the academic community. Although they did not fail in their assignments, they were unable to participate effectively in academic discourse (Wilson, 1999). For these students the academic process was painful and frustrating. They were not able to cope with reading the necessary sources, both because of lack of basic vocabulary and because they could not distil meaning from text; nor did they have the confidence or ability to write coherent text in response. Other factors were involved in their marginalisation from the discourse community, including a surface approach to study (Biggs & Moore, 1993), a lack of understanding of their expected role in the academic culture, and a lack of appropriate study strategies. But underlying all these factors was a fundamental lack of basic literacy skills in understanding and generating text in English.

To summarise, although the performance statistics show that ANESB students are achieving reasonable pass rates in Australian universities, these statistics do not show up the depressed level of ANESB students' grades, nor the struggle faced by many individual students in coping with study. Language skills inevitably contribute to this struggle for many ANESB students.

What are the language development needs of ANESB students?

The linguistic competence of ANESB students is extremely varied depending on their educational background, previous language training, amount of exposure to English as a second or foreign language, first language background and personal motivation. At one end of the spectrum, the language needs of some ANESB students, particularly recently arrived migrants, may be similar to those of international students. On the other hand, ANESB students who have been in Australia throughout their school years are more similar to Australian ESB students in their academic language competence (see Figure 2). Chanock and Cargill in Chapter 1 of this volume have described in more detail the spectrum of language skills amongst ANESB students and the commonalities between ANESB and ESB students. However, nearly all students, whether Australian ESB, ANESB or international, enter their courses with little knowledge of the discipline-specific conventions of communication within their field of study.

Figure 2. Characteristics of international, ANESB and ESB students' academic language skills.



ANESB students' educational background is the first factor affecting their language skills. Some have had extensive language training in their own

country and are familiar with grammatical terms. These students may also be familiar with the academic conventions of their own culture. Others have picked up English in Australia and become fluent speakers and competent listeners. However, many ANESB students, even those who have been born in Australia, will have had little exposure to academic English, and consequently lack academic language competence.

As Chanock and Cargill (Chapter 1) point out, first language background affects the particular language problems experienced by students. It is helpful for this reason if LAS advisers are familiar with the characteristics of the students' first language. Interference from the student's first language may be at the sentence level: for example, in Spanish, commas are often used where English would use a full stop, so one paragraph may be punctuated as one sentence. Explaining this contrast to a Spanish first language student can make a significant difference to the student's ability to punctuate, and hence to communicate effectively in writing. At a textual level, the LAS adviser needs to be aware of features of contrastive rhetoric. For example, it will be very helpful to an Indonesian student to compare the Indonesian tradition of presenting an extensive background for the reader with the Australian academic tradition of focusing on analysis of key issues. The literature on contrastive rhetoric is extensive (see, for example, Kirkpatrick, 1997; Hinds, 1987; Kaplan, 1987).

Motivation is another factor affecting students' language skills. Migrants often have strong instrumental motivation. Paradoxically, this may have both positive and negative effects on their language skills at university. Some ANESB students realise that, in order to achieve in Australian society, they will need to further develop their communication skills before starting university by attending advanced English classes or university preparation courses. However, others feel so pressured to move forward quickly in their careers that they do not want to spend time polishing their English. Such students often embark on university studies before they are equipped with adequate language skills. Perhaps because there are minimal language requirements specified by universities for ANESB students, they assume they will be able to succeed. For some it is a rude shock to have to deal with academic texts, write 3000-word papers, and make oral presentations. When such students also have family commitments and/or work commitments, the pressures are enormous. Dealing with the burden of assignments may mean that the student has little time or energy to spare on improving English language skills.

Thus, the academic language competence of ANESB students varies widely. Every ANESB student has his/her own specific needs depending on language

background, educational background and individual attitudes. Although some, like the Kurdish woman Chanock and Cargill describe in Chapter 1, need little assistance, others find every aspect of university study a struggle. While they may manage to pass their subjects, they may be achieving learning outcomes which do not reflect their potential or their level of commitment.

Compensation strategies

As LAS advisers we need an understanding of the study strategies our students are using in order to assist them to attain positive learning outcomes. Individual consultations provide good insights into these strategies, and there is also a growing body of research describing NESB students' study strategies. Most of this research considers NESB students in general, not differentiating between ANESB and international students. However, such research is quite apposite to ANESB students, especially those who fit towards the left side of the diagram in Figure 2: that is, those ANESB students who most resemble international students.

The research tends to categorise students' study strategies in terms of the four language macro-skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, another useful parameter for exploring learning strategies is that suggested by Biggs & Moore (1993) and Ramsden (1988). Biggs and Ramsden use the notion of deep and surface learning strategies. Deep strategies involve the student in taking a deep interest in their subject, reconstructing concepts, relating evidence and arguments, interacting vigorously with the texts and engaging with the task. Surface learning strategies, on the other hand, are used simply to pass the course; as Biggs (1993) puts it, to 'satisfice' the assignment requirements. Some NESB students appear to resort to surface strategies because of a lack of language skills. Adamson (1993), in a qualitative study of non-native English speakers in the United States, uses the phrase "compensation strategies" to describe the study strategies used by students to compensate for poor language skills. While compensation strategies may help students to pass their course, they may also have the effect of locking students into surface learning.

In the following section, I review the research on NESB learning strategies and attempt to categorise these strategies as deep/surface. My intention in doing this is not to be prescriptive or exhaustive but to provoke reflection. As LAS advisers we cannot prescribe learning strategies, nor should we condemn the strategies our students use. However, we can help students to expand their repertoire of study strategies, and assist them to acquire new capacities. The deep strategies in the tables below are often needed by ESB

students, as well as by ANESB students. However, limited vocabulary, limited grammatical competence, and limited comprehension and expression skills make the strategies at the same time more crucial, and more difficult for ANESB students to acquire. Thus the challenge for LAS advisers in assisting ANESB students is twofold: to assist ANESB students to acquire the necessary language capacities and at the same time to assist them to acquire deeper study strategies.

Listening to lectures

One of the most difficult aspects of study for ANESB students can be listening to lectures. Two useful studies which give good insights into the strategies used by such students are Oner & Denham (1993) and Mulligan & Kirkpatrick (1998). Oner & Denham (1993) discovered that many NESB students compensated for poor listening strategies, in effect, by NOT listening. For example, some students in their study relied on visual cues, such as overhead transparencies. These students felt that they could get the essence of the lecture in this way. However, what is important in lectures is often not the content items, commonly listed on overheads, but the logical links between them explained in the spoken delivery. Similarly in Mulligan & Kirkpatrick's (1998) study, students commented that it is hard to listen at the same time as copying down content from overheads: *You either listen or write, but you can't do both.*

Compensation strategies which involve NOT listening may enable students to get through the course, but they are not very effective in terms of developing listening ability. Furthermore, they may effectively prevent students from developing the ability to listen critically and develop deeper study strategies. One common practice is for NESB students to record lectures, given the lecturer's permission. This can be an effective strategy both for understanding the main points and for building listening skills, as listening and listening again is an effective way to improve listening comprehension (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994, p. 63). It can also help students to get used to lecturers who have unfamiliar pronunciation. However, it can turn into 'busy work' if students attempt to transcribe swathes of text on a regular basis, instead of learning to listen for, and reflect on, main points.

Figure 3: NESB students' listening strategies

Surface strategies	Deep strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing lectures • Relying on classmates' notes • Taking notes from visual cues only (e.g., overheads) • Transcribing lectures from cassette word by word 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading beforehand • Listening for content rather than taking notes, and using the lecturer's notes later • Taking notes of main points • Reorganising/reviewing notes after the lecture • Discussing with other students • Relating lecture content to the course/ previous experience/ other situations • Listening critically and analytically • Recording lectures and listening again

Mulligan & Kirkpatrick (1998) point out that lack of familiarity with vocabulary and the time factor involved in phonological and grammatical processing can make it difficult for NESB students to be able to practise the deeper processing strategies of relating content to prior knowledge, note-taking and critical listening. However, strategies such as reading beforehand, discussing with other students and reviewing lecture notes can enable ANESB students to strengthen their lexico-grammatical competence and develop effective learning strategies.

Academic reading

The volume of reading expected in most courses can pose serious difficulties for NESB students, as it can for many ESB students, especially those who do not have much experience in dealing with academic text. NESB students, though, may be struggling with an overwhelming load of unknown vocabulary, not to mention complex sentence structures and grammatical metaphor. This extra cognitive load can make reading very time-consuming for NESB students. Reid and Mulligan (1998) found that NESB students were taking two or three times longer to read an assigned text than ESB students.

The compensation strategy most commonly used by NESB students in reading, as pointed out by Farrell et al. (1992) and Johnson and Ngor (1996), is to focus on recognised content words. In my own study of note-taking

strategies, I found that the “mute outsiders” would look up key words in the index of their textbook, identify slabs of text containing these words and then copy these slabs on to their word-processors as “notes”. They could see that the slab of text was relevant, even though they did not understand what it meant (Wilson, 1999).

Another common strategy is translating (Reid et al., 1998). Again this strategy focuses at the word level of the text. Because of the overload of unknown vocabulary, students will frequently look up words in the bilingual dictionary. This breaks the cohesion of the text, and may even confuse the meaning if the translation is not appropriate.

Figure 4: NESB students’ reading strategies

Surface strategies	Deep strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking of something else while reading • Looking up unknown words in bilingual dictionaries • Taking notes by copying out chunks of text into handwritten or word-processed notes • Reading without looking for bias • Focusing on content words rather than on main propositions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying main ideas: looking for top-level structure • Guessing meaning from context • Relating ideas to other texts, lectures, prior knowledge • Surveying the text before reading • Evaluating while reading; looking for bias • Recalling, note-taking, questioning (SQ3R) (King and Eilers, 1996) • Thinking analytically while reading (making comparisons/looking for cause and effect/problem and solution etc)

For this reason, as LAS advisers, we generally encourage ANESB students to use top-down reading strategies, such as awareness of genre, and identifying top-level structures and main ideas (Meyer, 1984) by noticing textual features such as headings, sub-headings, topic sentences and text markers. We try to persuade students to use the bilingual dictionary as little as possible, and instead to infer meaning from context. However, these strategies often leave students feeling very insecure, and may be inappropriate when students need to understand dense text, such as exam questions. Also as Block (1986) pointed out, top-down strategies such as guessing the meaning from context and using prior knowledge can lead students to construct meanings from the text which are vastly different from those of the author.

In other words, bottom-up reading strategies of understanding text at word and sentence level can be important too. For example, a student who came to see me recently had unfortunately misinterpreted her assignment topic in which she was asked to "trace the development of advertising in the last century". From a Chinese language background, she was not sensitive to singular/plural distinction in English, and had interpreted century as "centuries". Consequently she had started her analysis from the Greeks, rather than focusing on the twentieth century. So NESB students can benefit from reminders about the significance of tense, number, agreement, anaphora and other bottom-up features of text as well as being encouraged to use effective top-down strategies.

Participating in tutorials and making oral presentations

Participating in group work, whether group assignments or tutorials can be one of the least rewarding experiences for ANESB students. As one Hong Kong background student said to me recently: *I try to talk and to give my idea, but other students they not listen to me. They just go on with their idea.*

There are several illuminating studies looking at the reasons why NESB students may lack the language skills to participate in tutorials. Jones (1999) points out that the language skills needed are not so much those of good grammar, or even pronunciation, but are connected to the pragmatics of the situation, such as knowing how and when to interrupt in order to make a point or ask a question. In Japanese for example, it is customary to leave a pause between one speaker and the next in semi-formal situations like a tutorial in order to show respect for the previous speaker. Australian speakers, on the other hand, find even a short silence uncomfortable. Rather than concentrating fully on what the current speaker is saying, an Australian student will be planning what she would like to say, so that she will be ready to jump into the discussion. While the current speaker is beginning to drop his voice to signal that he has nearly finished his turn, the Australian student is beginning to move forward in her chair, perhaps nodding her head and murmuring "Mmm". She will already have the attention of the group as the current speaker finishes so that she can take the floor immediately.

Practising tutorial skills in NESB-only groups can be a useful transition to the hurly-burly of the authentic tutorial setting, especially if students are given coaching in pragmatics. Positive experiences in mixed groups of native and non-native speakers can also be very constructive. LAS advisers can arrange sessions of this kind to assist NESB students to gain pragmatic competence appropriate to the tutorial situation.

Figure 5: NESB students' tutorial strategies

Surface strategies	Deep strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just sit • Hide from the tutor as much as possible • Learn oral presentations by heart—discourage questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to follow and to participate • Listen attentively • Ask for clarification • Ask questions • Prepare questions and comments beforehand • Read, think and revise lecture notes beforehand • In presentations, talk from overheads, Powerpoint slides or notes

Academic Writing

One problem that LAS advisers need to deal with is a surface strategy occasionally used by ANESB students to cope with written assignments, that is, exploiting all the various sources of assistance available—lecturers, tutors, friends, LAS advisers, student mentors. While this can be an effective strategy in terms of completing the task in hand, in the long-term it can generate dependency. Instead of focusing on building up effective language and study skills, the student continues to lack confidence in their own capacity. The first responsibility of the LAS adviser, then, in terms of writing is to assist students to become autonomous (Collins, Shrensky and Wilson 1998).

The most common compensation strategy in academic writing is over-reliance on the texts of other writers. While this is usually labelled plagiarism, Pennycook (1996) and Scollon (1995) emphasise the cultural relativity of this term. In China traditionally, for example, reciting the words of the masters is encouraged as an appropriate learning style (Biggs, 1996).

Many NESB students use some form of plagiarism to compensate for perceived or actual language difficulties. A common strategy is what Whitaker (1993) calls "plagiphrasing". Whitaker describes plagiphrasing as creating a kind of patchwork of pieces of text taken from different sources. Often this is apparent because of the change in tone, style, or voice between one section and another. However, when plagiphrasing is used adeptly, it can be very difficult for lecturers to know to what extent a student's text is copied. In fact, a well-plagiphrased text integrates material from different sources, emulates the target genre, and is coherently developed. Thus, plagiphrasing can be a highly effective strategy in terms of passing course requirements.

Plagiarising is usually cast as a surface strategy. Students manage to fulfil the task by copying and integrating selected slabs of text using minimal interaction with the key concepts. Indeed, LAS advisers often come across students who present apparently impressive written assignments, although they are unable to explain any of the concepts orally, suggesting that they have understood little of what they have written. However, plagiarising can also be a constructive way for students to learn how to use the language of the discipline. Wordings from the source texts can provide a kind of scaffolding which assists students to write "academically" and acquire increasing competence in the target genre (Wilson, 1998). Conversely if NESB students are forced to use their 'own words', they may be at a loss for suitable language.

When it comes to exam preparation, some ANESB students memorise long chunks of text. Again this may have been regarded as a valid learning strategy in their previous learning environment. Definitions, in particular, lend themselves to this treatment. Open book exams, of course, encourage wholesale copying and students who are allowed to take a page of notes into the exam will often cover it with extracts from the textbook, or even write out whole essays in advance. In fact, these strategies can be remarkably effective in enabling students to pass, and are implicitly condoned by markers, although they will probably not lead to deep learning outcomes.

As with the other macro-skills, it is apparent that surface learning strategies in writing can enable students to pass. However, more positive learning outcomes will be achieved by students who are taking an active role in interacting with the concepts. Only students who are responding to sources, reconstructing ideas and thinking analytically will be able to develop a voice and participate in the dialogues of the discipline. For students who are struggling with language, using wordings from the texts may be a useful bridging strategy. However, those who copy mindlessly, or who are over-reliant on sources of support will remain trapped in a surface learning mode.

Figure 6: NESB students' academic writing strategies

Surface strategies	Deep strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plagiarising • Memorising text for exam purposes (e.g. definitions) • Translating from L1 • Depending on sources of assistance, such as learning advisers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressing ideas in your own voice, backed up by evidence from the literature • Synthesising material from a range of sources • Reconstructing ideas and explaining them in your own words • Noticing lecturers' feedback • Using models of good writing • 'Noticing' vocabulary and collocations while reading

How can LAS advisers assist ANESB students to adopt effective language and learning strategies?

The first issue that LAS advisers need to deal with is the deep vs surface learning strategies conundrum. In order to do well in their studies and maximise their learning outcomes, ANESB students need to become proficient in using the deeper language and learning strategies. As they develop greater familiarity with academic English, they should be able to use increasingly analytical and independent strategies. The skill for LAS advisers is to be able to steer students towards these strategies, without condemning or denying the effectiveness of surface strategies in enabling students to pass. Students who are pushed too far too soon will tend to cling to surface strategies and ignore LAS assistance.

Secondly, it has to be acknowledged that ANESB students, despite their wide range of skills, educational backgrounds and attitudes to study, are bound by one fact: that studying in a second language imposes specific linguistic and cognitive challenges. Until they have reached a high level of proficiency in English, and particularly academic English, ANESB students will be facing an extra cognitive load. This is not to deny that some ESB students, for whatever reason, may be faced with somewhat similar challenges in becoming familiar with the discourse of academia. However, if we ignore the specific difficulties of those students who are struggling, we may be failing to give adequate assistance to this group.

Once these specific challenges are recognised, it is clear that LAS advisers need to develop means to assist ANESB students. Perhaps the first


imperative is for LAS advisers to continually expand their understanding of second language teaching and learning issues. However, they also have a key role in the university in communicating this knowledge to other lecturers. In addition, LAS advisers have a role to play in the university as advocates for ANESB students both at the personal level of individual assistance, but also at the institutional level in terms of policy development. Finally, LAS advisers need to develop, implement and regularly evaluate a wide range of learning assistance strategies or modes.

The modes of delivery of LAS assistance for ANESB students are discussed elsewhere in this book. The current dominant paradigm is that mainstreaming assistance for ANESB students is generally most effective and equitable, while maintaining one-to-one assistance to target the specific needs of individuals is also important. However, in some cases, generic workshops may also be useful for ANESB students, especially in institutions where there are relatively few second language students. There is a strong argument, for example, for providing "top up" grammar classes.

As I have argued, some ANESB students have language needs at fundamental levels of lexico-grammatical processing which are different to the needs of other students. While all students need to be made aware of discipline-specific conventions such as citation conventions, the nature of evidence and argument, and the use of technical vocabulary, some ANESB students need help with more generic language skills. Language problems with grammar, sub-technical vocabulary and collocation, and sentence cohesion are not discipline-specific (see Figure 7). They are also more typical of NESB than ESB students, although some ESB students may also need to extend their skills at this level. Such needs may be more effectively targeted in generic workshops, or by providing autonomous learning packages.

Intensive courses in generic skills can give ANESB students a substantial chance to work on their language skills in a supportive environment. The workshop facilitator has to be alert to analysing students' needs and targeting sessions to meet these needs as efficiently as possible. If students are given as much opportunity as possible to put new or refined language and academic skills into practice and they are encouraged to seek immediate feedback, they can benefit greatly from intensive generic workshops. A two-week intensive writing course, for example, can allow facilitators ample opportunity to scaffold their students' acquisition of both bottom-up and top-down academic literacy skills and to steer them towards deeper study strategies.

Figure 7: Generic vs discipline-specific language features

<p>Generic language features</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • morphology, pronunciation • sub-technical vocabulary and collocation • sentence structure, punctuation • cohesion between sentences • paragraph structure and cohesion • text structure and cohesion • intertextuality and referencing conventions • technical jargon and collocation • nature of evidence
<p>Discipline-specific language features</p>	

Generic literacy workshops may work best when receptive and productive skills are integrated. Learning to structure their own texts coherently helps students to observe the features of others' texts and vice versa. Observing how subtechnical academic vocabulary is used in context enables students to collocate their own writing effectively.

Generic workshops also give students an opportunity to compare the genres of different disciplines. This can be very useful as all students need to learn how to adjust their writing for different purposes and different audiences. For example, comparing referencing conventions across texts from several different disciplines can help students to understand more clearly how to use sources most effectively in their own discipline.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have endeavoured to show that insufficient English language skills and an over-reliance on compensation strategies may impinge on some ANESB students' learning outcomes. LAS advisers have a range of options available to address these students' needs for language and learning development. The options they choose will vary depending on the nature of the institution and the students themselves. While discipline-specific assistance may offer the most equitable way of targeting a cohort of both ESB and NESB students, other options such as generic workshops and individual consultations offer useful alternatives to help students deal with specific language difficulties. The most effective way to meet the diverse needs of ANESB students may be to offer as wide a range of alternatives as possible. In the final analysis it is the students themselves who control

their learning outcomes, but LAS advisers can play a pivotal role in enabling ANESB students to break out of the 'pass' bracket and confidently enter the dialogues of academic discourse.

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CHAPTER 3

MODES OF DELIVERY: FACE-TO-FACE LAS PROVISION

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Introduction

As we have seen, the category of ANEB students is far from homogeneous. Their needs overlap in some ways with those of international students, and in other ways with those of locally born and educated students, both NESB and native speakers of English. Within each local context, the current constellation of need must be determined by working individually with students from all groups enrolled and by researching the nature of the courses they are studying. Ways of addressing these needs must then be negotiated within the organisational and resourcing constraints of the institution. This chapter looks at a range of possible approaches, depending on the modes of teaching and learning we are involved in. It suggests that the most equitable and efficient way of providing language and academic skills may be to integrate them into the curriculum of subjects in the disciplines, and looks at one example of a program of this kind. Whatever approach is favoured, however, it is likely that a combination of methods will be helpful, as each mode of teaching—one-to-one, in dedicated class sessions, or through an integrated curriculum—provides opportunities for learning about, and advising on, the things that students need to know.

One-to-one

For one-to-one work, we need to know as much as possible about each person, whatever their origins, as everyone's needs are different. It is helpful, however, to be able to tell students which of their difficulties are characteristic of ANESB students and even of their particular language background. Problems with English vary a bit with first language, as Kate Wilson discusses elsewhere in this volume. In addition to her examples, we can note that students from Romance language backgrounds often have problems with the idiomatic use of prepositions in English, while students from Asian language backgrounds have problems with definite and indefinite articles and with inflections for tense and number which are lacking in their first language. Apart from differences of this kind, patterns of discourse, too, vary with experience of different academic cultures.

Among the discourse patterns that LAS advisers have noted is that some Asian background students are reluctant to spell out their points early in their text, preferring to defer to the reader's perceptiveness in drawing conclusions from their material (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991, pp. 51-5). Spanish background students, in my experience, may write more discursive, less dense or compact prose than Australian supervisors tend to favour. Vietnamese students, Phan Le Ha (2000) tells us, would like their efforts at producing an abstract and beautiful style of writing to be more appreciated by Australian readers. The literature on contrastive rhetoric is extensive, and can help to alert us to problems of "fit" between students' texts and readers' expectations (for an overview, see Connor, 1996; Leki, 1991; for advice to students in Australia, see De Fazio, 1999, pp. 66-71).

Discussions with colleagues in LAS advising suggest that, generally, differences of organisation and style have more serious consequences than grammatical errors. Underlying these differences are differences in the styles and purposes of teaching and learning. Students can be confused about their relationship with lecturers, how they are supposed to learn, and what they are being assessed on. It is helpful, therefore, to know whether particular students who consult us have attended school in Australia. If not, their expectations of the roles and statuses of teachers and students may be different from those of their peers and tutors here (Ballard & Clanchy, 1984; De Fazio, 1999). In turn, their assumptions about the type of work they should be producing are related to the kind of audience they expect their tutor/lecturer to be.

At the same time as helping individual students to recognize these differences, we can also share what we know with their tutors and supervisors. It can be useful to alert them to the reasons for problems of "fit" between their students' work and their own expectations, and we can enlist their help in mediating the disjunctures between different academic cultures.

Classes

When it comes to offering classes to larger groups of students, our knowledge of specific differences can play a different role. If groups are mixed, it may not be useful to go into detail about the traditions of discourse from which students come, but it is helpful to focus their attention on the idea of discourse itself; on the broad ways in which discourses can vary; and on the features of Australian academic discourse that they must learn to control. Clarification of the purposes of assignments, the importance given to methods, the roles of theory and evidence; practice in examining text structures, identifying genres and registers, adopting

voices; awareness of the context of the discipline, with its intertextuality and practices of attribution; all of these are helpful to students, whether international or local, migrant or Anglo. Similar kinds of discussion, examples, and practice can be put on the web, too, for students who may choose not to consult us in person or seek out classes in academic skills.

Mainstream measures

Because most students do not seek help outside of the discipline subjects in which they are enrolled, any efforts to improve our delivery should include some way of integrating LAS advice into mainstream subjects. This is important not just because the students are there, but also because the sources of their difficulties are not just in themselves and the backgrounds they come from. To an equal or even a greater extent, students' difficulties are caused by the confusing nature of university study, and we need to focus not only on the culture they are coming from, but also on the cultures into which they are entering.

It is a common idea, but not a helpful one, that NESB students' problems are only with language, and that language is separate from ideas: if that were so, then language could be taught in another place, without reference to the ideas that students need to understand and express. Such an approach respects the fact that NESB students often have more comprehensive knowledge and complex ideas than they are able to express in English. However, it is counterproductive inasmuch as it locates the problem in the student and the solution in the language teacher (cf Flowerdew, 1994, p. 240; Lea & Stierer, 2000, p. 3; Bartlett 2000). It does not look at how the target discourse is related to the subject being studied, and it does not ask the discipline teachers to think about how they use language/discourse, and to focus on this explicitly in their teaching. This explicit focus is needed because what is good for any group is usually good for all, and, as we have seen, the idea of an unproblematic "mainstream" is often a myth. The "mainstream" may also need help with academic discourse, much of it the same kind of help that ANESBs need.

There is a wide variety of ways in which academic skills advisers participate in, or influence the teaching of, subjects in the disciplines. We may conduct classes, or distribute materials (in print or on the web) to support particular subjects. We may be involved in teaching part of the regular lecture or tutorial program of the subject. We may suggest methods the lecturers can use to make learning more straightforward for the students. The kinds and degrees of involvement that are possible vary with the type and organization of subjects, the attitudes of lecturers and their perceptions of the role of

LAS advisers, and the funding available to us, but it is possible to suggest a framework for thinking about what kinds of information and experiences we could try to offer.

LAS advisers are sometimes daunted by the variety of discourses their students are required to handle, and many agree with Spack (1988) that it is safer for our students if we do not attempt to go there. With the growing trend towards integrating skills instruction into the disciplines, it has increasingly been observed that there is great variation both between and within disciplines and new interdisciplinary fields (Baynham, 2000). The more closely we look at instruction within a discipline, and at the reading and writing required of students, the more fractured and opaque these become, until it seems that there are no standard, reliable genres we can teach to students (Stierer, 2000). From professional courses, to pure and applied sciences, to social sciences, arts, or cultural studies, there are different emphases on mastery of a body of facts; on development of methods and procedures; on the status of values and assumptions; on looking at the world and at cultural ideas through different lenses. What counts as a question, an argument, evidence, authority, validity and usefulness, varies accordingly, as do the ways of presenting the products of one's thinking.

Rather than being defeated by this variety, however, I think that we can try to look for the relationships within it (cf. Bazerman, 1981). In each subject area, there are patterned relationships among the various features of the discourse, and we can show these to our students. Variations in the conventions governing academic "voice" are a good example of this. For example, in courses like Theatre, where audience response is part of what is being studied, the student is often speaking as a member of the audience and a first-person narrative of his/her participation in the experience can be appropriate; in courses like History, where the object of study is far removed from the student, his/her judgements about it are offered in the third person, and based on accounts by or about those who were involved. What voice is considered appropriate, and what is accepted as evidence, are not arbitrary in either of these examples, but stem from the kind of subject it is (cf. Chanock, 1997).

If we want to design some kind of focus on the discourse of a subject, then, we need to know about the subject's purpose. To what extent is it aimed at training students in a method, and to what extent does it seek to inculcate particular values in them? We need then to see how its purposes inform the conventions of its discourse, with regard to its genres; its text structures; its projected audience(s) and the voice(s) it adopts to address them; the evidence it values; and its practices of attribution.

Some of these things will be common across a range of disciplines, and others specific to particular disciplines. To learn which patterns are common and what variations are characteristic, we can visit lectures, collect course guides, and check our impressions with the course lecturers. While this sort of research may seem too specific to be of any general use, I think it is probably the only way we can arrive at generalisations accurate enough to be really useful, and interesting enough to convince lecturers that they are worth presenting explicitly to students.

How?

If our observations are to be useful to the students, we need to show them how the purposes, values and practices we have identified are manifested in the tasks required by the subjects they are studying. Opportunities to do this may be limited, as when we are invited to give a single "guest lecture" in a subject; or they may be more extensive, as when we are asked to collaborate in designing curriculum in a subject to incorporate a focus on skills. While collaborations of this kind give us more scope to influence learning in the subject, even the guest lecture format can be used to some advantage.

Guest lectures

Many of us are invited to visit a course and examine, with the students, some of the texts they read and those they write. Lecturers are not accustomed to analysing such texts in terms of the elements listed above, and do not usually see this as a part of their job. However, it is a common experience of LAS advisers that students will not attend such classes unless they are in the usual teaching time slot and the lecturer is present; we should, therefore, make this a condition of our participation wherever possible, and use it as an opportunity to model exploration of the discourse.

When we give "guest" sessions on a particular topic—such as reading an article or summarising an argument, writing a literature review or constructing an argument—we can focus at both generic and specific levels simultaneously, because the topic is generic but the materials we are examining come from the course we are addressing. In such a session, we can invite lecturers to see what is generic; to see that it requires explanation; and to see how it can be explained in concrete terms. I have found, for example, that after a couple of years of watching me demonstrate the characteristic structure of articles in his discipline by highlighting the context, problem, thesis, and sequence of topic sentences in the reading for the current week, a lecturer began to do this himself in another course that he taught, and did not need me any more to do it. For

this reason, when I give a class that walks the students through some "skill", I try to include discussion of why anyone would want to do whatever it is, how it relates to other kinds of work both in and outside of the academy, some steps with which they can approach the task, and what the final product should cover, in what kind of form. In other words, I try to model not just how to do the task (for the students), but how to teach people why and how they should do the task (for the lecturers).

Integrated focus on discourse

While guest lectures are a useful bridge into a subject, a more thorough-going approach is to integrate a focus on the discourse into the subject materials so that every tutor is teaching it as a matter of course. This helps to develop an awareness of discourse shared between staff and students, and to ensure consistency between tutorial groups and continuity from year to year. It is important to offer activities that tutors can easily integrate into their teaching, and materials they can readily use. With heavy workloads and a rapid pace of institutional change, tutors are understandably reluctant to take on more complicated or time-consuming projects.

In the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in which I work, subjects across a range of disciplines have incorporated a program with the title "Introduction to Academic Discourse." In designing this program, I drew on teaching methods already in use in these subjects, and targeted assignments that students were already being asked to do. The program did not, therefore, require staff to change the subject they had planned, but it offered a way of making the purposes of the subject, and the nature of the work, more explicit to the students. At the same time, it made these more comprehensible, by highlighting the common features in an otherwise bewildering variety of activities. It is often the case that, in all of the different subjects a student is studying, s/he is engaging in the same kinds of activities, but that the differences in subject matter mask the similarities between the tasks. As the introduction to the program, addressed to lecturers, put it;

Most disciplines put their students through a recursive process of examining primary sources in terms of an explanatory framework, and testing the framework against the sources. However, when the sources are as different as a poem, a painting, a television commercial, a set of barracks regulations, a table of statistics on domestic violence, and an account of a cockfight, it is not surprising if students do not realise they are engaged in a similar process with each one.

What I was proposing, therefore, was “a way of giving more obvious coherence to the BA by helping students to see what the approaches of different disciplines have in common.” This was that most first-year courses are constructed as apprenticeships in the method of their discipline. There are common elements to this process, in which students are introduced to:

- the characteristic questions of their discipline
- the process of understanding theories and recognising them in, then testing them against, primary evidence
- the international conversation in which scholars in the discipline are engaged
- current debates in the discipline, in which students are encouraged to participate.

I circulated materials which the coordinators of first-year subjects could use ready-made, or tailor more closely to their subject if they wished. These included five brief weekly readings for students, about a page in length, plus a tutor’s version with ideas about how to use these readings. Each reading for students explicitly discussed, within the framework of the “common elements” above, an aspect of the work being done concurrently in the subject: first, differences between school and university; next, the use of primary sources; then, argument carried out in secondary sources; fourthly, note-taking and referencing as acknowledgment of conversations in the discipline; and, finally, critical reading. The tutors’ version suggested ways of relating each generic reading to the particular sources and activities they were doing that week in their particular subject. The common thread throughout the readings and activities was the idea that knowledge is constructed rather than discovered, and that this is done within a discipline, by methods that students are expected to both learn and criticize (an Appendix to this chapter shows the first week’s materials, for students and tutors, together).

In the first week, for example, the reading introduces university disciplines as academic communities that ask particular kinds of questions. To relate this to the subject they are studying, students go through their course guide and colour-highlight all the questions that they find there, and tutors can clarify what each kind of question is for (to orient them to the subject as a whole? To be answered in writing in preparation for the week’s tutorial? etc.). While students are usually expected to read their course guides when they get them, most do not; and this focus on questions provides a systematic way of accomplishing this, constructing an overview of the subject, relating its components to each other, and relating it to the context of the discipline.

In the second week, students are introduced to the nature of primary sources and the reasons for learning to work with them. Although these are usually the most challenging component of the course, it is chiefly by working with

primary sources that students can experience the problems involved in making knowledge and become aware of the process of research and interpretation that has gone into the secondary sources they will read. In the tutorial, they learn what kinds of primary sources they will deal with in the particular subject, and how that work relates to the other components of the subject.

In the third week, they examine secondary sources as arguments that propose and demonstrate a particular interpretation of evidence, addressing some problem which is under discussion in the discipline. In the tutorial, they focus on the structure of a written argument in their field, locating the thesis of one of the week's readings, and then follow this up by highlighting the thesis and topic sentences of the next week's reading.

In the fourth week, students analyse the use and attribution of sources as ways of keeping the discipline's construction of knowledge moving, open, and accountable (rather than "finding quotes" or "avoiding plagiarism"); and they examine the use of sources in their reading and the implications of these practices for their note-taking. Finally, in the fifth week or later, they look at the idea of critical reading: that the social construction of knowledge carries a responsibility to question ideas and test them against experience. In the tutorial, they examine a flawed or contested interpretation from their current readings.

This introduction to the idea of discourse is designed to take about twenty minutes during each of five tutorials, and tutors who are using it say they find it a helpful orientation for staff and students together. It is important that the program presents this focus on discourse as part of the development of expertise in the course, rather than as a remedial measure. By inviting tutors and students to analyse the culture of each discipline as a culture, with practices rooted in particular purposes and values that can be made explicit (and even questioned), we recognize the extent to which both natives and newcomers may be outsiders in their first years of academic study.

These are just a few examples of the ways in which our knowledge of the needs of ANESB students can feed into the information we deliver, and the experiences we design, for students confronting the discourses of academic study. Here, as in the various suggestions we find in the literature on teaching NESB students, it seems likely that measures that help NESB students will be helpful to the rest as well. For example, Purdie recommends that students be provided with examples of assignments considered acceptable or unacceptable in terms of their content, style, and citation (2000, p. 123). Lynch (1994, pp. 281-4) recommends that lecturers signpost clearly, increase redundancy, provide visual support in the form

of overheads and handouts, and clarify the ground-rules for each teaching mode (e.g., whether and when questions should be asked in lectures). Thomas (2000) shows how tutors can present ideas diagrammatically, to complement their verbal explanations and communicate more effectively with students for whom the language is an obstacle to understanding. All these suggestions, and many more that call on tutors to be explicit and to model their assignments, originate in a concern for the needs of NESB students, but are helpful to everybody. The more we can influence teaching practices in these directions, therefore, the better use can be made of the insights gained through working with NESB students.

Conclusion

What needs to be known, then, in order to improve our delivery, is how ANESB students, among others, experience the demands of studying in our universities (and one-to-one consultations are an essential source of insight into this). What needs to be changed is the habit of thinking that study problems are caused by deficiencies in the language and educational backgrounds of the students, and can be solved by further study of English language and "good writing" rules. What needs to be developed is awareness, on the part of both staff and students, that the discourses of knowledge construction are distinctive, new, and necessary for success in academic study, and should be not just assessed, but actively explored in every first year course.

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APPENDIX - CHAPTER 3

Appendix 3.1

(The students' materials are in normal print, the tutors' materials in italics)

introduction to academic discourse for first year students
(Discourse?—talking, thinking, reading, writing, or a particular kind)

I. Transition to university: "osmosis" or what?

For some people, adjustment to studying at university seems relatively painless. Somehow, they work out what it's all about by the time they have to write an essay, and on they go. For other people, it's a puzzle, and they're not even sure what they're puzzled about. We know that university is different from school, and not just in the obvious ways, like lectures and the fact that nobody makes you go to them. It's actually a different kind of project, intellectually. But what does that mean? We also know that the air is full of clues as to what it means, and that some people pick them up (how?—by osmosis?) and that some people don't. Since some people drop out, and others go on but never get the best out of their courses, it's not good enough to rely on "osmosis". It is possible to set out for you some of the important ways in which university study differs from what you may have done before, and that's what these materials are for. You've succeeded with your learning so far, in school and out of it, and there's every reason to think you can succeed at university. But just as you've had to learn what each new context was about—high school, a job, a sport, a baby—you've got to learn what goes on here too.

What's New?

What kind of project is university? And how is it different from school? Well, the main purpose of study at high school is to learn **what our society knows** about all sorts of areas—or at least, what it's picked out as most important. The main purpose of university study is to learn **how that knowledge is made**. You do some of that at school too, of course, so you've got some of those skills in researching and interpreting raw information. But mostly, there's just so much to learn that you have to be offered, and to accept, whatever most people can agree on as fact. At uni, the emphasis changes. You're still reading a lot of information, but the **focus** is on how people find, and choose, and interpret information to come up with sensible explanations of it. We don't think of knowledge as something out there, waiting to be discovered. We recognise that it's made by people: that a fact

only exists because somebody has asked a particular question of particular raw materials, and that s/he only asked that question because a community of thinkers wanted to add to, or correct, or rethink, what they thought they knew about a subject. This idea, that knowledge is constantly made and remade by people, has a lot of implications for the way you listen and read and think and write at university.

Disciplines

For one thing, knowledge is made, in our culture, within academic communities called disciplines. These are the various branches that make up the university: Legal Studies, Physics, English, History, etc. The disciplines have grown up around different kinds of subject matter and different methods of enquiry, parcelling up knowledge so that people can specialise in one field and go into it in depth. Each discipline is like a smaller culture within the larger culture of the university; each one has its own history, its own customs, and its own dialect of terms for talking about its subject matter and ideas. This means that there are things we can tell you about the way that university study works in general, but, at the same time, it's going to be a bit different in each course that you take. For this reason, the general points that are brought up here will be followed up by your own course tutor in tutorials, so that you can put them to work immediately in whatever subjects you are studying.

What do the disciplines have in common? Broadly speaking, the people in them are engaged in a spiralling process of research, where questions lead to answers which lead to more questions, and so on. You may be only visiting this process, but your course will treat you as if you might decide to stay—after all, you might!—and your BA is like an apprenticeship in that process. You go into a field of study, usually, because the subject matter interests you. But you soon find that you have stepped into the middle of a long-running conversation among all the other people who have opened that door. Particular questions are currently being talked about, and people are looking at old information, and discovering new information, with those questions in mind. Your subject will probably present you with an overview of the kinds of questions your discipline has asked, and also try to involve you in the current conversation, whatever that is.

How are you going to know what the questions are? Listen to the questions lecturers ask **themselves or their audience** when they're lecturing. They don't expect anyone to answer, usually; but the questions are your clue to what the discipline is interested in. Another place to look is your course guide, which, again, is usually packed with questions. You won't be able to

answer them this week, but it's a good idea to see what they are, so you'll know what you're looking for in the reading, and what you have to think about for your essays. Your tutors will take you through their course guides.

1. Tutorial Talk: What are the characteristic questions of this discipline? How are they reflected in the central question(s) of this course? What are the central questions of this course? The students can discover the latter by going through the course handout, looking at its aims and objectives, introductory matter, titles of lectures, tutorial questions, and assignment topics. This will get them to look at the course as a whole, which will help them to anticipate, to fit the pieces together, to focus their reading, and to know that they should keep referring to the course guide as they go on, and what kind of guidance they are going to get from it. How it relates to the larger questions of your discipline is something they cannot know, but you can talk about that.

Tutorial Exercise. Get students to highlight the questions in your course guide, and read some of them together. Talk about what you want them to do with some of these questions: are there some questions you want students to bear in mind throughout the course? Are there questions on which you want them to make notes in preparation for particular tutorials?

CHAPTER 4

COMPUTER-BASED LAS PROVISION FOR ANESB STUDENTS

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Introduction

This chapter addresses the issue of modes of delivery mainly from the point of view of computer-based learning. One of the questions raised in the ANU workshop was whether non-native speakers of English, and by extension, ANESB students, needed different modes of delivery for learning experiences and materials than ESB speakers in order to maximize their academic chances. If this is the case, then a logical second question to ask is would different modes of delivery also benefit students from other groups which are traditionally seen as disadvantaged, and if so, should we not be simply developing more inclusive practices all round? As Chanock and Cargill argue in Chapter 1, ANESB students are widely variable in their characteristics. Secondly, many of the characteristics we find in this group are also found in members of other groups, such as mature aged students or those with disabilities. We do know that widely different learning styles exist among any student population, and that different learning styles lend themselves to different modes of delivery, but there is no hard evidence to generalise that people of a particular language or cultural background will favour one mode of delivery over another. We therefore need to know more about the characteristics not only of ANESB students but all students, especially those who are seen as disadvantaged.

It is further argued that there needs to be a better understanding by academics and curriculum and materials designers of both the possibilities and limitations of technologically mediated teaching and learning. Finally, what needs to be developed are more flexible modes of delivery that students can access as and when they choose. This strategy should have the effect of raising the levels of academic performance generally, taking students in a range of disadvantaged categories along with it.

What do we need to know?

To improve current practice both LAS advisers and institutions need to know more about our students. Exactly who are our students, what are

their linguistic and cultural backgrounds and how do they characteristically learn? It is generally assumed that the majority of students at Australian universities are native speakers of English. Consequently, ANESB students are often positioned as a minority group outside the mainstream. However at the University of Western Sydney (UWS) at least, this assumption is challenged by the figures. Data collected for DETYA statistics for the two former UWS Nepean campuses in March 2000 showed 16,191 enrolments. Of these fully 5,817, or over one third, claimed to speak a language other than English at home. Further, in a sampling of three very different areas of academic study—Engineering, Business and Education—50% or fewer students in each area claimed to speak English at home. In Business, only 69% were permanent residents or Australian citizens, so a large proportion could be assumed to be international students. However, in Engineering and Education, over 90% were permanent residents or Australian citizens, therefore the non-English speaking background students could be assumed to be mostly ANESB.

It needs to be made clear that the high figures for ANESB students at the University of Western Sydney do not necessarily reflect the situation at all Australian tertiary institutions, and it cannot be assumed from these statistics that all students who speak another language at home need additional language and literacy support. Also, ANESB students are not a homogeneous group, and as Chanock and Cargill have pointed out (Chapter 1), there is not necessarily any greater degree of difficulty with academic studies associated with being ANESB as opposed to being a native speaker of English. Attendance figures of students who used the services of the UWS Learning Centre for individual literacy and study strategies consultations or generic workshops in 1999 show that of 636 Australian citizens or permanent residents who sought LAS support, 42% were ANESB. These figures, though not definitive, indicate usage by the ANESB student group in more or less the same proportion as their representation within the overall university population. (By contrast, international students were over represented). It also needs to be said that linguistic plurality may actually be seen as an advantage to students, enabling them, among other things to be able to take a more critical and objective view of ideas and institutions within the host culture (Kramsch, 1993).

There are also other groups such as mature-age students, and students with disabilities, who may share some of the same needs as ANESB students, and who might benefit from different modes of delivery. For example, McInnes and Hobson (1998) found that mature-age students returning to study after many years or studying at an advanced level for the first time often lack confidence in speaking and writing academic genres and feel overwhelmed by the amount of reading required, just as some non-native speakers do.

Students with disabilities may need particular consideration, such as clearer visual or verbal presentations, longer time for reading, and a generally more flexible approach. A common reaction to special provisions among students from all of these groups is that many of them do not want to be singled out as different, and resist attending 'special' programs. As members of these groups frequently share common needs, the argument for separating out the ANESB students for special treatment becomes less convincing.

Research into learning styles and strategies

Willing's research (1993) indicated a wide variety of learning styles in adult immigrants. Any large population of students will exhibit the full range of learning styles, and it seems there is no particular learning style that is peculiar to students of one particular language background. Littlewood (2001) surveyed 2,656 English language learners across eleven different countries in Asia and Europe and found a wide range of individual differences on how students liked to learn. Despite cultural differences, however, the majority of English language learners showed a preference for active participation in exploring knowledge and in working purposefully in groups towards common goals.

Given that electronically mediated modes of teaching are becoming mainstream, an important question is whether different media, and especially electronic media, favour one type of learner over another. This is not an easy question to answer because of the many different types of computer-based media now available.

Computer-mediated Communication (CMC) is a general term for the use of computer systems and networks for the transfer, storage, and retrieval of information (Santoro, 1995, p.11). Salaberry (1996, p. 17) in a review of the pedagogical implications of CMC for second language learning categorized three broadly different kinds of CMC: "Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI), Information (internet resources in general), and Conferencing Services (electronic mail, bulletin boards, listservs etc.)." CAI includes Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), Multimedia applications such as CD Rom, as well as Intelligent CALL (ICALL) which relies on artificial intelligence and expert systems research.

Salaberry (1996) discussed four learner types: absorber, experienter, explorer and practitioner (Higgins, 1988) with respect to four distinct kinds of computer assisted language learning (CALL). These were instructional (programmed learning), revelatory (structured learning as in simulations), conjectural (task-based) and emancipatory (providing on-line tools to facilitate learning). In Salaberry's opinion, the conjectural and emancipatory

modes of CALL instruction were more conducive to the development of situated cognition, that is, learning embedded in social practices, rather than derived from generalized knowledge structures (Lave and Wenger, 1991). According to Salaberry (1996), both CAI and CALL have been disappointing to teachers in that they lean towards the behaviourist paradigm and their use has not led to significant instructional changes in the classroom. The success of multimedia has been mixed, and more dependent on the theoretical or methodological approaches underlying the classroom application than the nature of the technology itself. ICALL is still relatively new and experimental. Only CMC is considered able to deliver the kind of interactivity and flexibility that can address disparate learner needs.

CMC can:

- address a specific audience for purposes other than demonstrating a skill;
- expand the network of peers for sharing work;
- increase access to cross cultural information;
- increase access to expert advice/guidance;
- free students and lecturers from constraints of time and place;
- allow for more spontaneous participation in group work and increase participation by minorities;
- increase motivation;
- provide access to a vast array of databases and on-line help;
- provide for asynchronous communication via email;
- provide a safe environment to practise skills without losing face (Salaberry, 1996, p.18).

CMC can also provide for synchronous communication with peers and instructor through various forms of real-time "chat".

The general literature on learning contains numerous reports but finds no significant difference between technologically mediated instruction and traditional modes (Russell, 2002). Instructional design and what students bring to the interaction appear to be more important than delivery mode (Carnevale, 2001). Green and Gentemann (2001) found no significant differences in grades between students who took an on-line course and those who took traditional classes, but there were increases in how much time students spent using computers and what they used them for. There is some circumstantial reporting of the benefits of CMC for particular types of student (Gollin and Kies, 1999). Minority students may be better represented, students sometimes share ideas more spontaneously, and students with various disabilities can gain greater access. NESB students with lower spoken English proficiency and relatively well developed reading skills (more likely to be international students) could benefit from

asynchronous learning modes, because they provide more time for reflection and repetition; it could also be argued that a range of other students, for example, those with learning disabilities involving short attention span, or reduced auditory discrimination, could experience the same benefits. Simple surveys of computer use on campus by particular groups do not necessarily provide an accurate picture of that group's preferences or capabilities. For example, Cameron (1998, p.56) found that although NESB students as a group were more reliant on university-based computer facilities, this may simply have reflected a lack of facilities at home rather than greater familiarity with computers. The NESB students surveyed preferred face-to-face or printed instructions to using a telephone help desk. In some circumstances NESB students may be more disadvantaged by technological modes of delivery than other groups. NESB speakers often look to spoken interaction cues (facial expression, posture and gesture) to support low aural comprehension. In an asynchronous learning situation, misunderstandings of the instructional materials may not become evident until well into the course, for example when the first assignments are submitted.

What these diverse views and findings suggest is that further research on specific academic skills and learning needs has to be carried out, and that in the meantime, learning opportunities should be provided in more than one mode, allowing students who favour one mode over another the opportunity to choose how they will learn most effectively. Globalisation and the information technology revolution will require that students and academics develop new technological literacies as a priority. Skills of on-line navigation and research, the interpretation and authoring of hypermedia, and communicating on-line either synchronously or asynchronously will be required of all (Warschauer, 1995). Such changes require LAS advisers to research and teach advanced reading and writing skills suited to the new technologies. Further, we cannot assume that native speakers of English have these skills to any greater extent than NESB speakers, so it makes sense to embed such skills in instruction across the board.

Students in general need guidance in learning how to learn on-line. They need technical knowledge as well as information processing skills. The demands of synchronous modes of on-line communication, such as chat and videoconferencing, require that students know how to contribute appropriately and effectively, and that they know how and when to give responses that contribute to the discussion. Students and academics alike experience information overload and technical difficulties, and students can feel that too much of the burden of learning is being placed on them in e-environments. Feedback from all academic stakeholders, including ANESB students, is important in designing more appropriate on-line learning

environments. Consultations with students and staff are a valuable resource for LAS advisers in eliciting this kind of feedback. Debski and Gruba (1999) investigated instructor attitudes towards project-based computing in foreign language CALL environments using interviews. Instructors expressed frustration with the technologies associated with CALL, even as they recognised the empowering nature of those same technologies.

Student and staff training are required on a large scale if CALL and CMC are to be used effectively, and many universities are beginning to provide such training. At Charles Sturt University (CSU), for example, there is training in learning on-line built into all distance education courses. Skills for Learning On-line, which received an award for excellence from ASCILITE (Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education) in 1999, gives students practical training in using the Internet prior to commencing formal studies. Courses are available on on-line study, the CSU website, searching the Web, electronic referencing and evaluating information found on the Web. Students get practical experience in aspects of computer-mediated communication such as web forums, email, listservs and chat rooms. Skills for Learning On-line is free to undergraduate students enrolled in CSU courses if they are in one or more of the DETYA equity categories. The course is the equivalent of approximately 13 hours study, is delivered on-line and is self-paced. Students receive introductory printed materials to help them access the on-line materials.

Another question that needs to be researched is what kinds of academic learning experiences are best presented on-line? There is an inexorable push worldwide towards placing more and more academic content on-line, driven largely by economic considerations as institutions strive to do more teaching with less funding (Feenberg, 1999; Warschauer, 2000). Many academics are questioning whether simply offering instruction via web-based programs or materials will automatically provide a good environment for learning. Feenberg (1999, p.5) for example, argues that electronic classrooms are a poor substitute for the face-to-face classroom, and that "interaction with the professor must continue to be the centrepiece of education, no matter what the medium". Nevertheless, in some subject areas academics are given no choice. They are expected to put their course materials on the web and students expect to find them there. Face-to-face hours become more limited as universities attempt to rationalise costs.

Many academics are still simply placing their traditional course materials on the web with no concession to the medium, with the result that many web-based course materials are far from user-friendly. In some web pages for example, navigability may be compromised by insufficient top-level macro information. This may be easily remedied by including more headings

and subheadings. The materials which may provide the greatest challenge to learning effectively include highly dense academic texts in tiny typeface on coloured and patterned backgrounds, some of which are impossible to read by the visually impaired, and difficult for the general reader as well. In many materials readers are forced to continually scroll down, rather than being able to jump to hypertextual links. Very few choices are provided to the reader to allow for different levels of background knowledge or interest in the subject. Links to other related materials that would support concept learning, academic literacy or improved computer and information literacy are not included. From a pedagogical point of view, one of the best guides is Kies (1998) who provides a very clear on-line tutorial on characteristics that make for effective interactive courses.

In Australian universities as elsewhere, there has been an explosion in the use of computer-based systems such as Blackboard, TopClass and particularly WebCT, which enable a wider range of approaches whilst being reassuringly "fool proof" for academics who are required to put their courses on-line, yet have little interest or time to devote to the mechanics of web-page design. Such systems lend themselves to pedagogical approaches which are problem-based and socially interactive and student-centred rather than passive. However, it should not be assumed that all courses are better taught in this way. Despite enhancements in computer technology which enable sound and video, the on-line environment is still essentially used for written interaction, and for strong academic reasons (Feenberg, 1999). Some courses will still be more effectively presented in traditional paper print or face-to-face oral format.

Salaberry (1996), Feenberg (1999) and others suggest strongly that the emerging role for technology is to support the human interface, not replace it. Programs such as WebCT should therefore be seen essentially as course management tools for helping instructors and schools administratively manage courses, both on-line and on campus. Their selling point to administrators is the ease with which the programs interact with the registration database at the beginning of the course (to populate the class sections with student names, ID numbers, email addresses, etc., for the class roster, class messaging system, and class grade book) and interact with the records database at the end of the course (to record the final grades on student transcripts automatically from the class grade book function). For academics there are course administrative functions too: message systems already populated with student email addresses, grade books that automatically calculate and record scores and grades, testing functions to create randomised and automatically scored exams.

However, existing course management systems offer relatively little to students. Kies (personal communication) predicts that soon we will see a new management system in place: content management. What would be most useful for the student and what would best promote learning in this respect are tools that allow students to interact with the material. Some of the tools he can see as quite feasible are interactive, context sensitive glossaries (especially in tech/scientific courses) that are available from any page in a website (via a right click on a word, for example). Students could also use better search tools of course materials, quick access to adaptive knowledge bases related to their academic area, and better ways of saving snippets of materials or annotating materials for later reference. These are part of what he calls "content management" as opposed to course management. All of this is quite feasible with current technologies.

Content management must include some sense of how well a student is doing and adapt content to maximize student learning. Assessment (not simply grades, quizzes, tests, etc.) should be, and can be, ongoing and interactive. Assessments can be as simple as "rate-this-page" feedback for the author. Assessment that is content-directed could also be linked to the content management system, so that should a student not be progressing well, the student is given new content appropriate to the student's problems and learning difficulties. Kies (personal communication) explains:

Something that I recently learned how to do for my courses on papyr.com was that students log in, i.e., give me their names, and I store that information in a cookie on their system and in a server-side log file. This logging system allows me to do several things, but most importantly it allows me to watch my students as they proceed through the course, allowing me to intervene when I think there is a problem.

Other approaches include database driven websites that could serve web pages to the student based on the student's previous history with the course and on short assessments to ascertain the level of the student's mastery of the material. These kinds of adaptive programs are increasingly common. Meanwhile for those seeking to establish student-oriented approaches to learning and information literacy, with different approaches available to students having different learning styles, excellent models exist, often in-house. In a support program for problems in immunology developed by Deane and Pennell at UWS, students are provided with carefully graded problems and access to a number of help pages on theory. Hypertextual construction with short bites of information or tasks with links to related pages is the key to its success. Tips on using the computer are included.

Nothing is assumed. Very simple English is used without falling into the trap of patronizing the user. Not only can students get on-screen help; they can also send comments directly to the lecturer. Features such as these are also available via commercial programs such as Blackboard and TopClass.

A postgraduate science nursing program at UWS provides clear, course-specific supplementary material on writing assignments designed by a LAS adviser in collaboration with academics in the school. The online material is linked via WebCT to the Learning Skills Unit website. In Engineering, a module on preparing engineering logbooks provides support materials which guide students through the process of reading and summarizing newspaper and journal articles and provides links to explanations of topics such as cohesion for those students who wish to further explore academic language.

New assistive technologies are also rapidly becoming available (Mungovan, Allan and England, 2000), although the advertising hype associated with such materials needs to be approached with some caution, and costs can still be prohibitive. Students who experience difficulties with reading printed material could draw on sources such as optical character recognition (OCR). Voice recognition and speech synthesizing software, although still relatively expensive, might provide a way for students whose orality far outstrips their facility with writing English to compose more fluently. These kinds of program are improving rapidly in their sophistication and ease of use. Although these software packages have been designed for users with disabilities, they might also be of value to certain second language speakers. Two examples of assistive technologies in this category are:

- Text HELP! <http://www.humanware.com/E/E3/E3F.html>
- WYNN <http://www.synapseadaptive.com/wynn/wynnsite.htm>

Text HELP! is a vocabulary support package that provides auditory feedback as the user types, or for highlighted portions of text. There is an audible thesaurus and spell-checker for 'spell alike' and 'sound alike' suggestions, and specialist dictionaries. The program also provides extra speech cues to help choose from similar sounding words. The program will read aloud any onscreen text, including web pages. Single words can be highlighted when the program is reading marked blocks of text. This helps learners associate written words with their pronunciation. The Program "learns" the user's style of writing and vocabulary for more accurate recognition as time goes on. WYNN allows a file to be opened and read aloud. Pages can be scanned then read aloud. WYNN also has dictionary and thesaurus, can add text or voice notes to a document, or highlight a section of text. WYNN can locate a specific word in a document, spell it aloud or break it into

syllables. Material is presented in auditory or visual modes. An evaluation by independent researchers of their wider applicability in academic studies would be valuable.

What needs to be changed?

Based on the issues outlined above, we need to rethink information architecture, that is, how web-based materials are structured to take into account the different linguistic and cognitive capabilities of students as well as learning styles. This is an issue for all students and academics, not just ANESB students. Academic staff need more principled training in developing materials for CMC, and students need improved access to computer literacy training. The way LAS advisers and academics deliver teaching and learning materials needs to be more than repurposing old material, more than putting class handouts or lecture notes on the web. The needs of ANESB students are diverse, and overlap with the needs of other students. Rather than attempting to tailor materials and delivery modes for each group, it might be more advantageous to the majority of students to focus on embedding principles of good teaching and learning strategies into all instructional materials, whether on-line or not.

At an institutional level, there also needs to be a greater awareness of the range of learning styles and strategies employed by all students, not just ANESB students, and an awareness that quality learning via computer-based technologies is not a cheap or universal alternative to face-to-face teaching. Access is needed to support not only language and literacy, but also information literacy and computing skills to enable students to take advantage of new technologies. Systematic diagnostic testing of first year students would provide evidence of differences among students and identify their literacy needs, and the on-line learning styles of all students needs further research.

Conclusion

There seems to be no evidence yet available which justifies presenting materials in different modes specifically for ANESB students. ANESB students' learning capabilities and characteristic learning styles are likely to be as varied as in the rest of the university population. Rather than attempting to artificially provide for this group, who after all, do not always see themselves as a discrete group, and who tend to resist identification, it would seem more effective to simply provide a richer range of learning modalities, using high and low tech solutions appropriate to the learning context. There is a clear need for better web-based materials for all, including content management software, if the web is going to become a core medium of instruction.

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CHAPTER 5

LAS ADVISERS' RELATIONS WITH ACADEMIC STAFF

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Introduction

As we have seen, ANESB students have many needs in common with the other students in their courses, and to this extent, it makes sense to try to integrate our offerings into the discipline subjects so that all students have the same opportunity to develop the necessary skills, as a matter of course. This means that we need to have good working relationships with the people who teach these subjects, so that we can be confident in proposing ideas and they can expect their students to benefit from our collaboration. The development of such relationships is partly a structural matter, and partly a matter of perceptions; let's look at these in turn.

Structural arrangements

If there are any structural barriers separating skills advisers from academic staff, these need to be addressed. In some institutions, skills provision is organized with the assumption that working with students and working with staff are different kinds of projects, and provision is divided between skills advisers, who work with students, and academic development people who work with staff. Implicit in such arrangements is the idea that students have learning problems and teachers have teaching problems, but that these are separate kinds of problems; it seems more likely that they are two perspectives on the same problem, and could usefully be addressed together. Academic developers draw upon a wealth of research into teaching and learning, while learning advisers have the additional source of insight that comes from working directly and continuously with students in the institution. If provision is organized so that these parties can work effectively together with teaching staff, that is all to the good; if not, it should not be organized in such a way that academic developers *rather than* skills advisers are seen to have responsibility for working with academic staff. Skills advisers need direct access to staff, with the aim of collaborating to help their students together. And it is important that we aim to work *together*, rather than approaching staff with offers like "this is what I can do for your students", or "this is what I can do for you", or, worst of all, "this is what you should be doing better".

We need also to reflect upon the way that academic skills provision is organized internally, for there are a number of different models in use (Van der Wal, Carmichael, McCowan & Hicks, 1998), and it is important to try to establish one that best suits local needs. Among the things we need to know more about is what structural arrangements are more facilitating of collaboration, and which are less so. In some institutions, all of the advisers are together in a separate unit; in others, they are part of a student services unit; and in others they are distributed amongst different Faculties or discipline areas. The latter arrangement has the advantage that advisers belong to the same structural unit as the academic staff they work with, so that their faces become familiar and their areas of responsibility are defined in terms of skills and discourse within a cluster of disciplines, rather than a generic bundle of skills. Even in a separate unit, however, different advisers can adopt different discipline areas as their stamping grounds and develop their expertise in those. The best kind of structure may vary with the size of the institution, the funding model to which it is committed, and the number and expertise of the staff; what is important is that decision-makers listen carefully to skills advisers' reasons for advocating the structure they consider most effective for their purposes.

Perceptions of our role

A different kind of obstacle to effective collaboration is the professional or "social" distance that sometimes exists between LAS advisers and discipline lecturers, and this is a matter of perception rather than organization. Discipline lecturers may have the idea that we are engaged in different kinds of projects, for example that LAS advisers are concerned with form as distinct from content, mechanics as distinct from ideas, even language as distinct from thought. We need to make it clear that these overlap (and how), and show them how students' problems originate in that overlapping space rather than in a language deficit. In my experience, even when discipline lecturers have thought of us as "comma doctors", they do become interested when they realize that we are more like guides to the subculture of academic study and discourse. This is because it is their own subculture we are talking about, and we are saying things about it that may not have been obvious to them simply because they are so close to the assumptions, purposes, values and practices of their discipline that these appear natural to them.

There is nothing natural or obvious, however, about the idea that knowledge is constructed. In fact, this flies in the face of the value professed by the wider community, that everyone is entitled to their own opinion. In Australian higher education, the right to an opinion has to be earned, by following an approved method of research and reasoning, which has got to

be demonstrated. It is likewise not obvious to students, when they enter university, that the construction of knowledge takes place within a social forum, a discipline community, and that this is the reference group to whom our voice and our apparatus of attribution are addressed. The need to address this forum generates text forms that are different from those learned at school and at work, so they need to be taught. Students do not come prepared to pose and contextualise a problem within a discipline, and construct an argument around it calling upon primary evidence and drawing critically upon discussions in the discipline community, all documented according to conventions that vary with each discipline and its particular history. When we approach discipline lecturers to collaborate on making the purposes and tasks in their subjects more explicit, therefore, we are not advocating "spoonfeeding", but rather a conscious mediation of the culture to which they belong. Unpacking this sort of thing can change ideas about what needs to be done and whose responsibility it is to do it, and help to close the gap between lecturers' perceptions of our role, and our own.

Apart from the professional distance stemming from misconceptions of our role, however, there is frequently also a "social distance" that hampers our effectiveness in working with teaching staff. Some of us are academic appointments, but others are employed in other categories, and this can give academic staff the impression that we are "not academic". If we are on the academic scale, we are often located at the junior end of it, and/or on annual, part-time or casual appointments (for a survey of LAS appointments and conditions, see Van der Wal et al., 1998). This situation is improving, with the development of our area as something that others recognize as a discipline, but improvement is gradual and impressions of us as "auxiliary" to the academic project persist. It is helpful, therefore, if we take as full a part as possible in the academic life of the institution, attending seminars of interest in the disciplines, sharing our research and publications with teaching staff: in general, being a colleague.

What needs to be developed?

There are many ways in which we can develop our lines of communication with academic staff. Most Faculties have lists of all staff emails, so it is possible to send a single message to all members of staff at once. These can replace ponderous, infrequent paper mail-outs; can go out as quickly and frequently as needed; can be brief and informal; and are more likely to be read and even answered if we are seeking a reply. We may wish to circulate bulletins each year, or each semester, informing or reminding staff of the things we are available to do with students, with staff, and together in their subjects (for an example, see Appendix 5A). We can send out information

about particular problems—for example, any difficulties we have identified for ANESB students—together with suggestions about how they can help. We can let them know what we are doing with other lecturers, any interesting thoughts we have had on learning issues (e.g., Appendix 5B), or interesting things we have learned at conferences or from reading. For example, I heard a paper at the Sept. 2000 Communication Skills in University Education Conference in Fremantle, on the subject of “Cultural differences in student perceptions of communicating and learning through traditional and web-based materials” (Ingram & Sweeney, 2000). The authors suggest that on-line subject tutorials are advantageous in some ways to NESB students, because they are able to compose their contributions instead of having to be articulate in English in a fast-moving discussion. They are therefore able to show that they have done the preparation for the tutorial, often more thoroughly than native speakers who nonetheless appear better prepared because they are more fluent! This is the sort of information we could usefully share with teaching staff via email bulletin. Similarly, when I read the July 2000 issue of the *ultiBase* electronic journal, devoted to a critique of teaching on the web, I sent out a message to let everyone in my Faculty know about this discussion and how to access it (*ultiBase*, 2000). The email lists can also be used to circulate papers we have written, and to alert staff to anything we are putting on our websites that may be of interest to them.

LAS newsletters can serve similar purposes. At La Trobe University, where LAS advisers are Faculty-based, we work together to produce a joint newsletter distributed to every member of academic staff in the university (again, this can be done electronically). We also encourage teachers in the disciplines to contribute to the newsletter, so that an exchange of ideas and experience develops around particular issues such as marking, peer mentoring, or the use of journals. Email bulletins and newsletters can be a good place, too, to suggest ways in which tutors can adopt an accessible and consistent way of commenting on students’ work. One of the problems that tutors raise is that they lack a common language for marking that their students can understand. We can see this, in a rather extreme form, in the comment on this passage of a student’s essay for English:

Mansfield’s approach to the theme of gender in “Daughters of the Late Colonel” focuses on two sisters, Constantia and Josephine, whom due to the way of life placed upon them by the morals set out by society have been illustrated to have “no role independent of the father”.

The tutor had circled “whom” and written in the margin, “You use ‘whom’ when the noun(s) for which your relative pronoun stands would be in accusative case in the subordinate clause”. In addition to the obscurity of this sort of

language, there is often further confusion when different tutors, or the same tutor in different places, mark a single kind of error in different ways, as when an incomplete sentence is variously labelled "fragment", "incomplete", "not a sentence", "no verb", "finite verb needed", "expression", "exp", "awk", and "!!". It is useful to draw attention to these problems, and to suggest a simple set of marking comments for use on the usual suspects.

Other lines of communication take the form of visits to various activities going on around us. We can go to lectures and seminars in discipline subjects, and talk with the lecturers afterwards about aspects that struck us as particularly effective, and/or problems that we noticed students around us having. We can attend meetings of new tutors, and any "good teaching" meetings in which department members share their peaks and troughs, methods and strategies, and are sometimes glad to have our input too. We can go to meetings of committees that are relevant to our work, to inform them of initiatives and/or ask their advice.

Finally, our work with individual students throws up many things that we would like to discuss with their tutors, focusing on problems located in the subjects rather than problems located in the students. One way into this is to collect the course guides on a regular basis, and talk to the tutors about these. We can check our understanding of what the subject is trying to do, and the nature and purposes of the tasks within it. This provides an opportunity to identify any use of language that is likely to confuse the students, and offer suggestions about alternative phrasing, or simply flag the places where explicit models and practice are likely to be needed.

For example, I saw a number of students last year with a Sociology exercise which, though brief, they found particularly difficult. The task read as follows:

You are asked in 600 words to examine the central argument in one of the pieces of sociological research listed below, analysing the degree to which it exemplifies a symbolic interactionist approach to deviance.

In order to do this well, the student needed first of all to appreciate that the question was about knowledge construction rather than about deviance, as many of them supposed. There were in fact four levels at which the piece of research could be read. Its topic was ritual child abuse in Satanic cults—a particular type of deviance (which, incidentally, the authors thought rare-to-nonexistent). Its focus of interest was on the "moral panic" engendered in the public by reports of such abuse. Its project was a "social constructionist" analysis of this moral panic. The project given to the students, however, was to decide how "symbolic interactionist" this analysis

was. If they got stuck at any of the intermediate levels—and they did—they could not succeed in this project. It was one which needed breaking down, and careful modelling, for NESB students, but also for ESB students who found the assignment too densely worded to get a grip on. When a LAS adviser becomes aware of an assignment as potentially confusing as this one, s/he can confer with the subject teacher to see what may be done to pre-empt confusion.

Conclusion

In all these ways, as well as by producing learning materials that tutors can readily use in their subjects, we can offer our knowledge and experience to colleagues in the disciplines—and in the academic development units—and try to integrate our strategies into the core teaching of our universities.

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APPENDIX - CHAPTER 5

Appendix 5A: Email bulletin to all members of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at La Trobe University, from the Humanities Academic Skills Unit

Information on the Humanities Academic Skills Unit for new teaching staff

The Academic Skills Unit of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences is located in HUM III, rm 422. It currently has one full time staff member, Dr. Kate Chanock (me); my background includes a BA in Anthropology, a PhD in African History, a Dip. Ed and an RSA Certificate in Teaching English as a Second Language. My research interests are in the discourses of academic disciplines, and my work with students reflects this focus, combined with a general effort to help them improve their English expression.

Most of the work students do with HASU takes the form of individual tutorials in which we talk about strategies for study, clarify assignments they are working on and closely examine the writing they are doing for their courses. About half of the students who consult me are referred by tutors, and the rest come on their own initiative. They show me essays that they've got back with comments they want to talk about, concerning problems they haven't understood, or drafts of essays they are working on. I act as an audience for the writing, get them to tell me what they are trying to do, how that fits in with the context of the subject they are studying, and what they know that is relevant. I help them to identify ideas that need more development, claims that need better evidence, things that need more explanation, and questions they should take back to their tutors. I also get them to focus on the structure and argument of the piece, particularly as regards introduction, thesis, topic sentences, focus of paragraphs, coherence, transitions, and signposting. I help them with learning how to use sources and handle referencing conventions. And I note their patterns of errors in expression, explain what these are and why they are making them, how to recognise them and how to correct them. This is usually an ongoing process, moving from a first step where I model corrections, to getting them to correct errors I find for them, to getting them to find the errors for themselves. Ideally this takes place over a series of appointments, but now that the Unit is reduced to half strength, there are students who are not getting the follow-up appointments they need. If you have students whose needs are urgent, and they cannot get in for an appointment with me, please let me know, as I can sometimes squeeze them into lunch times, early mornings or research times. You can ring me on x2535 or email me on c.chanock@latrobe.edu.au

As well as the individual tutorials, I offer some lectures and workshops (see my handout for students). Everyone is welcome to attend to these (including interested staff), and I rely on teaching staff to publicise them, so please display my posters on your door if you can and draw your students' attention to them.

Please come and see me if you would like to talk about any aspect of HASU's work, or about your students, or about difficulties they are having with your subject, or just so we can meet! The rest of this sheet suggests ways that I hope I can help you, and ways I hope you can help me.

- **Please let me know if there is any way I can help with problems of writing in your subject.** Extra lectures are not, in my experience, sufficiently well-attended to justify putting on, but some subjects have a regular lecture slot reserved for returning the first or a subsequent essay, and you may like me to join you then to talk about some of the problems people had with that essay and some of the ways they tackled these successfully. I prepare for this by reading 10-15 of the essays, covering a range of marks, and picking out examples of good introductions, good use of evidence, good transitions, etc, and noting what kinds of expression problems were common so that I can spend some time on these. Because the preparation is so intensive, this kind of participation would need to be arranged well ahead of time.

Any other ideas are welcome, too. If there is any way I can work with you in your subject, I can achieve considerable economies of scale; also, your students can see that attention to writing is a mainstream concern at university.

- **Please try to make work with the HASU seem normal!** Most new students do not flock to classes in academic skills, as they do not anticipate needing advice when they have been successful at VCE and in gaining entry to university. This is particularly so if they think the advice is likely to be remedial, rather than addressing concerns which are common to university undergraduates. I would like them to realise that students at all levels of marks, and at all year levels (including Honours and Postgrad) work with me, and that improving one's writing is a normal part of academic life. I intend to continue working with students at all levels, in spite of the increased pressures I am anticipating, because I think that helping students to realise their full abilities is as important as the safety net function; work with the HASU has often enabled a C student to go on to Honours. It is also important that HASU should continue to be known as a respectable place to go, considering that half of my students each year come without referral.

• **When you are marking essays it would help me if you labelled errors in the same way I do** (Suggested labels in bold below). This is also the terminology that students will find in my booklet, *Just Enough Grammar* (the name says it all!), which they can get at the La Trobe Uni Bookshop for \$2.00.

Often a student will make the same kind of error frequently, but cannot see the pattern if the errors have been corrected in a variety of ways (for example, when a student writes run-on sentences, you might be inserting full stops in some of them, conjunctions in others, semi-colons or colons in others as appropriate. All of these are possible ways of repairing a run-on, but it would be useful if you could label it "run-on" so that students will know that they should come to a class on run-on sentences). Our students make a whole range of errors, of course, but the Big Five are these:

1. **Incomplete sentences** (no subject/no main verb/start with a joining word): e.g., "having lost all hope"; "The point being that no remains have been found"; "Though some may yet come to light".
2. **Run-on sentences** (2 or more main clauses run together).
3. **Commas** where they shouldn't be, or none where they should be.
4. **Problems of subject-verb agreement** (plural subject, with singular verb or vice versa): e.g., "The bulk of the evidence were parchment scrolls." Pronouns that don't agree with their antecedents are less common, but quite common enough. Please just label any of these "agreement".
5. **Yes! The possessive apostrophe!**

Thanks! I look forward to working with you.
Kate Chanock, HASU

Appendix 5B: HASU email bulletin to members of the Faculty of HUSS

Dear Colleagues,

I've been talking with people about the pros and cons of assigning essays at first year, and I'd like to share with you some of the ideas that have surfaced.

Against essays, people say:

- It's hard to mark them, with so many students
- It's hard to achieve consistency in marking priorities and styles across a subject
- Essays do not resemble any other writing a person will ever do, so it's odd for us to make them the test of students' merit
- Essays are not a good teaching tool because each tutor gets very few chances to respond to a student's work

- Students often do poorly on early essays, because a) they don't yet understand what an essay is, and b) on starting uni, students are not well organised to do justice to a few widely spaced assignments. The disappointment of starting uni with a low mark may cause students to leave, or to lower their own standards for themselves.
- Students may read for the essay, but not consistently for tutorials throughout the subject.
- This year, the VCE goes back to written-in-class assessments, so in 2 years' time we will once again have students who are not trained in redrafting.

In favour of essays, people say:

- No other form of assessment requires sustained argument in structured prose, and this is a good thing to develop.
- No other form can show that students have understood the development of ideas through the semester, and how the ideas in the subject relate to one another.

For these reasons, even people who have reservations about essays are reluctant to replace them with tests. I think there may be an alternative, though, coming out of the way that academic journals are used in some subjects, and I wonder what you'd think of it:

Some subjects require students to write a page each week on some question about the week's reading. This may be a hurdle—a "passport" into the tutorial, without which the student is marked absent, although s/he may stay—or it may be marked. It is exploratory, but not informal and personal, as subject journals often are in American universities; it is expected to conform to standards of academic writing (and referencing can be required, even if only one source was used). It is designed to get students to do the reading and to think about it in writing; it alerts the tutor to problems of expression with which the student will need help (though not to problems of structuring a longer text); and it makes sure that the students have some well-focused notes to use when they write essays or study for exams.

If you like the idea of students keeping an academic journal, you might still see problems with it:

- It doesn't develop the same abilities as essays do.
- It's too much writing to require (and to read!) in addition to essays.

There may, however, be ways of solving these problems. Suppose that:

1. You ask students to write a page each week; they keep a copy and give you a copy.
2. You don't mark these, but read some each week and offer written

comments (getting round the whole tute about once in 3 weeks). You might also read a couple of adequate ones aloud from the week before, each time (without names), to give students an idea of each other's approach; this gives you a chance to talk about what is good use of evidence, good weighing of arguments against each other, relating ideas to each other, whatever you'd like students to be aware of as good academic writing practices.

3. You ask students to revise their copy in the light of the tutorial discussion each week.

4. Students submit for assessment what they consider to be their best 5 (or whatever).

5. You read these, together with the copy they wrote at the time of the tutorial, and give a mark that reflects both the quality of the original work and the quality of the student's subsequent thinking about it.

AND/ OR, if you feel the essay is a valuable form, you could be marking some of these journal pages for credit, AND

6. Late in the semester, devote a tutorial to working out essay questions with the students. They prepare by asking themselves what larger questions were addressed by some three, or five, or whatever, of their journal pages; they articulate some question that they want to write about, based on these pages plus their thinking at this stage of the subject, and bring that question to the tute; in the tute, they share their questions, and you ok them or help them to rephrase their question so that it's relevant and answerable.

7. They submit an essay for some percentage of the mark.

This might fulfil the aim of building up an understanding of the organising ideas of the subject as it goes on, and having an assessment that brings that purpose to the fore. It would still mean less marking, and it would

- Help students to develop their academic writing towards an essay, without getting a large bad mark early on
- Help them to get through the first semester without panic, because they'd be doing small pieces of work at a consistent pace
- Mean that they'd get feedback early and get an idea of what is acceptable, in time to use it.

How feasible or useful these ideas are, I'm not sure; but I thought, as issues of marking and problems with essays are much discussed, it might be useful to put some of that discussion together in case it's of use to anybody.

Best wishes,

Kate.

Kate Chanock, HASU.

CHAPTER 6

MEETING ANESB STUDENTS' LAS NEEDS IN AN INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

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Introduction

When considering what needs to be known, changed and developed at the institutional level to improve provision of LAS to ANESB students, or any student "group" layers of incongruent agendas complicate the task. The student population of the modern university is becoming increasingly diverse to the extent that there is often no easily identifiable "mainstream", but rather a number of heterogenous and overlapping "groups", with diverse learning needs within the academic context.

Further, as argued earlier, attempts to single out particular groups and strategically target LAS assistance can often be an exercise in futility because many ANESB students will not self-identify, while others will not access LAS provision. Nevertheless, it is incumbent upon institutions to recognise that students who are experiencing—or are likely to experience—particular difficulties as a result of their linguistic, cultural, educational and/or academic backgrounds do need LAS assistance, and that recognition should extend to the provision of adequate resources with which to provide that assistance. Arguably three conditions are required to achieve this: improved identification and academic monitoring for all students; policy that promotes the discipline-specific, and curriculum-integrated instruction in language and academic skills; and policy that recognises and promotes the spectrum of roles for the LAS adviser, from curriculum developer to LAS adviser for individual students.

The preferred solution would see the institution provide adequate funding for detailed research into the students' needs, for the ongoing collection and analysis of accurate data, and the provision of individualised and well-informed LAS assistance. However, as universities struggle to maintain funding levels and all staff are stretched to do more with less, pragmatism

prevails and the LAS approach needs to be efficient, reaching and supporting as many students as possible in an effective and equitable way. Broadly conceived, meeting ANESB students' needs can be equated with improving their learning outcomes in the post-secondary context. If this is to be our focus, there are three important communication contexts to consider: face-to-face communication; communication through the programs and materials we provide; and communication in the wider learning and teaching contexts of our institutions.

Communication via individual consultations

The first and most obvious communication context in which LAS advisers seek to meet all students' needs, including those of ANESB students, remains face-to-face communication, mostly in one-to-one consultations. Although the situation varies widely, many LAS advisers have at least some of their time designated as available for meeting with students individually, for periods ranging from 15 to 50 minutes. This is a vital component of our work, and one we seek to defend vigorously in the face of attacks on its "efficiency". The factor often overlooked by those mounting such attacks is the essential relationship between what we learn in these consultations about student learning needs and the broader approaches we implement in our institutions as a result. These consultations constitute the enormous advantage we have over many content-based academics, in that we become privy to how students engage with raw learning materials they have been presented with. This is particularly important for ANESB students, because their difficulties are often quite complex and not susceptible to simple "tick-the-box" identification (see Introduction).

Like most one-to-one teaching contexts, individual LAS consultations have been little researched, largely due to their private nature and the intrusiveness of collecting data in such a context. Communicating with students in this context has been even less of a focus. Thonus (1999) investigated the spoken discourse in writing centre tutorials in a US university to establish how tutors' levels of directness in making suggestions varied according to the type of student they were working with—but these tutors were senior students rather than academic staff. With a UK colleague, Cargill compared discourse features between postgraduate supervision meetings and tutorials conducted by language advisers working in a self-access language learning centre in the UK; both these contexts share some features with one-to-one LAS work, but differ from it in others (Cargill and Mozzon-McPherson, 1999). Cargill and Mozzon-McPherson focused on repetition as a communication strategy, and highlighted a range of functions in the two contexts, some of which were closely related to discourse from therapeutic counselling sessions (Ferrara, 1994).

An issue that emerged as significant in research on face-to-face consultations in the postgraduate supervision context is of particular relevance to work with ANESB students (Cargill, 2000). This analysis pointed out that when students from NESB are extremely fluent in spoken English, their conversation partners are less likely to recognise that communication strategies they use may well emerge from their first language and culture, and may therefore be non-congruent with the expectations of the hearer. The example given in the paper is of a Filipino student responding to a question from his supervisor using frequent hesitations and laughter. Cargill proposed that the supervisor may have interpreted these features in terms of his being uncertain about the content of his reply, whereas the literature suggests that they may have reflected a communication strategy for appearing appropriately modest in Tagalog. When these research findings are viewed alongside the published literature on intercultural communication (e.g., Scollon and Scollon, 1995), there are clear implications for the training of LAS advisers working in our increasingly multi-cultural university environments.

In fact, the training of LAS advisers represents a promising research agenda, as the range of base disciplines from which we come seems to be extremely wide, and it appears that shared values, rather than a shared base of content knowledge, often characterise us most clearly. Work was done during the 1990s in the Language and Learning special interest group of HERDSA (Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia) to document both the range and the commonalities (HERDSA, 1999), but many questions remain to be answered. In the context of individual consultations with students, for example, important issues include the following: what knowledge and skills do we recognise as underpinning our practice when we work one-to-one, and what specific factors come into play when we work with ANESB students?; and is there a key set of skills and knowledge that could form part of a training agenda?

A further area of interest is whether as a profession we would want to work towards some sort of specific qualification, such as the diploma proposed for language advisers in the UK (Mozzon-McPherson, 1998). Many LAS advisers have TESOL qualifications, but the extent to which TESOL courses focus on one-to-one teaching also varies. In addition, increasing casualisation of the LAS area makes it difficult to rely on in-service professional development as a tool to enhance these or other required skills. It would be unfortunate if the current system-wide emphasis on gaining higher degrees and publishing research were to minimise the importance of face-to-face skills. A way to avoid this eventuality would be to initiate some sustained research on the skills themselves, and how they contribute to the effective meeting of student learning needs.

Communication via materials, programs and approaches

The second context relates to the implicit communication with students that takes place via the materials, programs and approaches we devise and implement. Most of us are aware in a theoretical way that all acts of communication have an implied receiver, and that many characteristics of this implied audience can be inferred from the texts we produce for them. We have all thought things such as: "She speaks to me as if I am 12 years old," or been irritated at reading documents that give a similar impression. However, it is difficult to keep this awareness in the foreground when we are producing learning materials or designing programs or curricula.

One of the major issues is the number of different audiences we are called on to address simultaneously through materials, programs and approaches. There are two major reasons for this. Firstly, the current context in our institutions emphasises evaluation to an extent that can direct the kind of products we aim to produce—better to write a straightforward 'how-to' explanation and place it on a web-site than to devise a more complex learning activity the evaluators may not see as relevant, even if we have despaired of the effectiveness of 'explanation' long ago. The "how-to" recipe will probably make more sense to the evaluators, even if in our expert view it is not the most effective way of meeting the learning needs of the students. Budgetary constraints play a role here as well. Putting forward arguments based on educational grounds is often possible only if the solutions they point to fit within financial constraints already decided by others in another forum. Nevertheless, our programs and materials still communicate with ANESB students by positioning them as a particular kind of audience. It is important to feel our ANESB students standing at our shoulders as we work—the same ANESB students we are privileged to know through individual consultations.

A second reason for needing to produce documents for multiple audiences relates to the types of materials and programs the current institutional climate is encouraging us to produce. A key descriptor is "flexible", which means that the same materials must be useful in multiple contexts, and therefore for multiple audiences. This is particularly the case where the materials are to be made available for courses. Tensions we encounter here relate both to generic vs discipline-specific or course-specific resources (essay writing vs essay writing for biology vs essay writing for the first assignment in Biology 1) and to resources for specific categories of students (essay writing for mature-age students, for NESB students, etc.). The decisions made about these issues in particular contexts significantly affect our communication with ANESB students, as with other students.

Communication in the wider learning and teaching contexts of our institutions

The third communication context involves the input we have as LAS advisers into wider learning and teaching contexts in our institutions, where we can act as advocates and facilitators for ANESB students. Our role in this communication context arises out of the two contexts previously discussed, and relates particularly closely to the more effective meeting of ANESB student needs. However, when conversation among LAS practitioners turns to participation in these wider discussions, the feelings expressed are often of disempowerment. Even if input is sought from the profession by committees working at policy level, the increasing casualisation of the LAS area means that many practitioners with potential for valuable input are precluded from contributing by the industrial conditions under which they work. Heads of units may be part of the wider decision-making processes of the institution, but they may need to represent a broad range of perspectives, often in a somewhat hostile environment, and the specific needs of ANESB students, for example, may be difficult to foreground. One way to combat this difficulty is for LAS advisers "on the ground" to ensure that we keep up to date with current research outcomes, and synthesise and report them to our heads in ways that will provide clear support for the perspectives we want to carry on behalf of ANESB students. Another is to initiate research into the issues we see as most crucial.

In this context, a further issue to be debated is whether, when considering improving communication with students, it is productive to focus on their residential status and language and cultural background as defining descriptors. The questions LAS advisers need to consider are these:

- How important is it in the overall scheme of things whether a student is of Australian non-English-speaking status, as opposed to international non-English-speaking status, or of Australian English-speaking background as opposed to an international English-speaking background? (see the discussion of presenting students' needs in Chapter 1).
- Are there other descriptors which may be more useful in alerting us to student needs and in enhancing the way we communicate with students, and if so, are these other descriptors likely to vary between disciplines?
- How are language and cultural variables likely to relate to learning style variables, if at all?
- Would it be useful to undertake research relating these variables or descriptors to the kind of LAS provision students experience as effective, and if so how should we conceive of such a research program?

Underlying these questions is the conviction that, in order to meet students' needs more effectively, we need first to find out to what extent current LAS provision is effective for various cohorts of students. Two questions immediately arise: the first, alluded to above, is how we define the student cohorts. The second is how "effective" should be defined in this context. Should research mainly be concerned with ensuring that the pass rates for the various cohorts are comparable to their participation rates? Alternatively, should representation in the credit, distinction and high distinction ranges also be considered, as in the study conducted at ANU by Bartlett and Ballard (1998). Related questions include these:

- Can it be determined whether a high TER score compensates for lower English language proficiency on entry?
- What effect would this have on the results of any future graduate skills testing regime? and,
- To what extent is it now appropriate to focus our arguments solely, or even mainly, around students' *perceptions* of support as being effective?

In examining the last of these issues, it will be important to consider what kinds of data our institutions are likely to accept as compelling evidence for a need for change, particularly a change in the way scarce resources are allocated. Given the existing strong emphasis on student evaluations carried out through formalised institution-wide processes, there is a need to work closely with the evaluators to ensure that the kinds of concerns raised here are adequately represented in the question-banks from which the evaluation questionnaires are prepared. A particularly thorny question, however, is how the formative evaluation received through anonymous questionnaire responses can be tied to outcomes—or whether it needs to be.

Having considered what needs to be known in terms of the communication contexts in which LAS advisers work, what policy considerations and implications are there within the institutions in which we work?

In order for LAS advisers to develop appropriate policy frameworks—discipline-specific curriculum integrated instructions and a multi-layered approach—first LAS advisers need access to improved identification and monitoring of student needs and progress.

Improved identification and monitoring

Accurate data on ANESB students' linguistic, cultural, educational and/or academic backgrounds, matched with their academic performance, would improve the LAS advisers' ability to more efficiently identify and work with those

students for whom being from a NESB is an issue. At the ANESB Workshop at the ANU in 2000, very few LAS advisers present considered that their institution had clear and effective information on the diversity of the ANESB cohort, including data on those ANESB students who fell outside the equity criteria. This constrains universities' abilities to respond to the diverse needs of ANESB students. The key information source for ANESB students tends to be the question on university enrolment forms—"Are you from a non-English speaking background?" Such a question may elicit a tick from not only recently arrived Vietnamese, but also from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, the Welsh and the Irish—the latter two cases at the ANU—who to a greater and/or lesser extent fall outside DETYA criteria. A first step in improving the identification and monitoring of ANESB students would, thus, be redesigning enrolment forms such that information about ANESB status, including length of time in Australia, parental native language and background was included. Further, there is a need for a database system to synthesise information on educational background, particularly experience in Australia, work experience and English language learning, and research the impact this might have on academic performance. At the University of Wollongong, for example, each incoming international cohort is screened for its academic and English language skills using a reading and writing task. The data collection includes language background, cultural background, language proficiency (e.g., IELTS/TOEFL scores), educational background and target degree among other variables. This data and the results of the task are then analysed to predict the LAS needs of particular "groups" of students. The information facilitates the strategic targeting of intensive LAS assistance in the students' first session of study.

However, while University of Wollongong's approach and data are just manageable at this level (up to and over 400 students per session), attempting to conduct such a task at the institutional level, from a centralised LAS unit, is more difficult. What has to occur is a Faculty/ Department-based approach to addressing learning needs, an approach facilitated by LAS staff, but owned by the Faculty. Such data could also assist in breaking down academic staff's frustrations in terms of their limited ability—in the context of mass education, student diversity and resource constraints—to adequately and effectively assist the diverse needs of their students. The motivation for the ANESB Workshop lay in a meeting of academics who claimed that the numbers of students experiencing difficulty with their courses was increasing, but the academics were unable to distinguish between ANESB students and international students. From discussion with LAS advisers and academics, such a difficulty would appear to be the rule rather than the exception, and arguably prevents academics from accurately identifying ANESB student needs and providing appropriate assistance or referral. Further, it is assumed that the "problem" lies in the

students' educational background and experience prior to coming to Australia. Accurate data about the diversity of their students would encourage academics to realise that the Australian tertiary student "mainstream", indeed the mainstream of many Faculties, is not necessarily Anglo-Celtic.

Policy that promotes discipline-specific, curriculum-integrated LAS instruction

To deal with the learning needs of diverse student populations, as well as meet the DETYA requirements on equity standards, most universities have developed teaching and learning policies that promote quality teaching and student-centred learning. In many cases, this policy emphasises the need for the explicit teaching of lifelong learning and LAS and, in some cases, recognises and promotes the LAS adviser as a key facilitator in such a process. However, in other situations the LAS adviser is considered peripheral to the teaching and learning nexus. Universities need structures of teaching and learning which encourage academic staff to work with LAS advisers in ways that exchange knowledge and lead to a greater understanding of the needs and experiences of students. A more comprehensive approach to identifying LAS issues which are impacting on students, and commensurate fora in which to discuss them, would be in the long-term interests of ANESB students, indeed all students, in terms of academic outcomes and student retention.

This suggests that an appropriate shift in the AVCC Guidelines (1999) would be to suggest that LAS is integral rather than a "support" to the student experience. Such a shift could facilitate the acceptance of curriculum-integrated LAS support, concurrent with, but more embedded than, discipline-specific LAS support. The curriculum-integrated approach promotes early identification of students' learning issues within their courses. Here accurate student data can be used to evaluate the course cohort to inform both teaching methods and the LAS provided. Data on the students' backgrounds, statistical analysis of students' academic performance, their successes and failures can be used to predict student problems and needs, and ensure that future delivery of the course caters for those needs.

The explicit teaching of discipline-specific discourse and conventions, including effective communication skills, is an important factor in providing a student-friendly curriculum to a diverse student population. Very often academics do not make their expectations sufficiently clear for their diverse student body until too late—after an assignment has been assessed. The level of frustration experienced by the students—why wasn't I told?—is matched by the academic's—why can't they do what they're told to? There

are no winners. The student's difficulties lead to a loss of confidence and a compounding frustration which may go unnoticed and unaddressed for a significant period of time, such that the first time any notice is taken is when the student is up before an academic progress committee. The academics and the institution suffer because potentially capable students are discouraged and withdraw from courses/studies. This trial and error approach lacks professionalism and is costly and time consuming.

For greatest relevance and efficiency, LAS provision should be a seamless part of the course curriculum, rather than be seen as "remedial" or a peripheral, less important aspect of learning. There has been a recent proliferation of stand-alone generic academic skills courses which have been introduced in order to—in some measure—address the diverse and increasing LAS needs of students, but there are two difficulties associated with such measures. First, the lack of embeddedness and the students' perception that such courses are "outside" the frame of core degree courses can lead to a perception of irrelevance and discourage students from taking them. Second, the financial and time costs associated with doing 'irrelevant' courses are perceived by students to outweigh the costs associated with doing professional/degree-relevant courses. Such disadvantages have led to recent initiatives by several universities (e.g., University of South Australia's and the Australian Catholic University's Inclusive Curriculum Projects) to mainstream LAS provision such that the teaching and learning approach includes all students. This kind of approach emphasises the link between equity and the quality of teaching and learning—what improves teaching and learning for one group of students, benefits all students.

Policy that promotes a multi-layered approach to LAS

In order to improve the educational experiences of students—not only ANESB students—universities need to develop policies that promote a multi-layered approach to LAS provision that recognises and promotes LAS advisers' diverse roles. There is no one right way to provide LAS for students; indeed there are many and varied models nationally and internationally (see Van der Wal et al., 1998). What appears to be most effective, however, are those models which have a number of delivery methods, or layers, of assistance and which take into account the local context. These may include curriculum development, generic and discipline-specific workshops, individual consultations and print and web-based learning resources. This diversity of provision needs to be recognised and protected in university policy in order to ensure that one approach is not over-utilised to the point of becoming non-self-reflective and dogmatic. Indeed, the greater the number of layers, the more students will be effectively assisted.

Further, for real change to occur, universities must also explore and implement effective strategies for translating policy into practice, and LAS advisers should be key partners in this process as they have extensive knowledge of students' LAS needs and the difficulties students face inside the curriculum. In order to achieve this, LAS advisers need to be involved in developing policy, exploring strategies and creating change within their university. They need to be systemic and strategic in the way they approach and work with academic staff in order to redevelop core curricula and enhance LAS provision. But they also have to remain in touch with individual students to maintain their understanding of students' LAS needs.

However, the mythology surrounding LAS advisers' roles often prevents their work and the methods of delivery they use from being fully understood. It is often assumed that LAS advisers are there to "fix" the problems, or that LAS provision equates with providing English language assistance; that we are proof readers/editors, or provide remedial assistance. As has been argued in earlier chapters, with ANESB students there is a temptation by both students and academics to see their LAS needs in terms of language, yet there are significant other dimensions including age, academic preparedness and educational experience. Above all, it is important that both students and academics do not all assume that the problem lies with the student—it may well be with the teaching and learning culture of the university. Thus, we need to ensure that our role and the various approaches we use are clearly communicated to students, academic staff and policy makers. This can be done through the promotion of our work in course guides, in—as Chanock advocates—bulletins and newsletters to Faculties, and more importantly, through involving academic staff with our work in courses, workshops and programs. We also need to work towards a shift from the perception that we work only with students who have problems, to an understanding that high achieving students, for example, Honours students, also benefit from our services.

Institutionally we need to work towards a shift in university policy such that it clearly states the role of LAS advisers in the teaching/learning nexus. This is crucial for the issue of LAS identity. Unless all involved in the teaching and learning nexus know and can anticipate the issues which may affect students, it is not possible to formulate effective policy and ensure then that it is implemented and adhered to. Policy is one way of using a "top down" approach to changing roles and attitudes. This does not mean that statements in policy will initiate overnight change. Shifts in culture, attitude and policy need time and investment, particularly in the area of professional development, to take effect. Part of this shift, therefore, relies on LAS advisers making clear to policymakers our key role in the teaching and learning nexus, and the link between LAS provision and student retention.

LAS advisers need to work closely with decision makers: such a shift requires dialogue between all those involved in the teaching/learning nexus.

Conclusion

ANESB students are the missing part of the tertiary education jigsaw. Universities pay a great deal of attention to international students, and for international students from non-English speaking backgrounds there is generally a recognition that they have particular difficulties. Universities also pay attention to the mythical "mainstream": much of the design, promotion and delivery of curriculum is premised on an "Anglo-Celtic mainstream". ANESB students are often not imagined as the mainstream, either in terms of the whole university, or at Faculty level. This being the case, it is understandable that less attention is paid to identifying their particular LAS needs, quite apart from their more general intellectual needs. Institutions will not be able to put the missing piece into place until they have a clear idea of who ANESB students are and map their diversity.

Renewed emphasis on the quality of higher education provision, this time through the lens of Quality Assurance (QA), provides us with a new opportunity to have these, and concomitant concerns of the LAS profession heard at an institutional level. However, for this to happen we will need to express and substantiate our concerns in a language the QA reviewers understand and value. This language will involve cogent argument based on research findings. As LAS practitioners we are ideally placed to gain intuitive knowledge of student needs. The next step is the development of research questions, the answers to which will allow us to argue for institutional responses which will better meet the learning needs of ANESB students—and very likely those of other students as well.

Ultimately, meeting ANESB students' LAS needs requires the embedding of LAS teaching within the curriculum but this cannot be achieved without university-wide recognition of the importance of LAS advising and experience, and the integration of LAS advisers in the teaching/learning nexus. Embedding implies that academics—lecturers and tutors—meet, are informed, and discuss how this might be achieved in ways which benefit all students. Such meetings are rare in university contexts. It is extremely rare, for example, for tutors and lecturers to meet and discuss—even on a Faculty basis—their experiences in teaching, what they have observed about students' learning needs, the diversity within the student cohort, and how this presents challenges for teaching. If such discussions do take place, they are more often than not of the "brief snapshot" variety, where the "problem" is attributed to the student. University-wide policy—clearly

articulated and implemented—is a way of ensuring a “top down” approach to effectively changing teaching practice in universities. Well-conceived policy, however, assumes that appropriate information is readily available to policy makers and that academics and LAS advisers have the opportunity to discuss and debate policy in its formative stages. Access and opportunity to engage effectively at these levels would appear to be lacking, and achieving it is one of the most important challenges currently facing LAS professionals.

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