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INTRODUCTION

There is something unique that we can come to understand when our diverse perspectives converge in our attempts to align them for some purpose.

Etienne Wenger

Between 7 and 9 April 2017, the University of Bristol hosted a convergence of diverse perspectives on the role of collaboration in EAP under the conference title of *Addressing the state of the union: Working together = learning together*. Bristol's Centre for English Language and Foundation Studies worked with Bristol's Student Union in organising the BALEAP event, and we certainly all learnt a lot in the process. Based on the feedback received after the event, I would tentatively claim that the aim of understanding and learning from other perspectives may also have been achieved. This selection of papers from the conference aims to broaden the reach of that learning, both among and beyond the participants. It represents a small sample of the perspectives that were shared during the three-day event. A wider perspective can be gained from

accessing slides through the 'past event' section of the BALEAP website here: <https://www.baleap.org/event/addressing-state-union-working-together-learning-together>

The BALEAP 2017 conference was dedicated to the memory of Bob Jordan, in recognition of his contribution to EAP. Bob was a co-founder of BALEAP's predecessor, SELMOUS (Special English Language Materials for Overseas University Students) in 1972, and he became the organisation's second chair (1973–1974), returning to the chair between 1984 and 1985. He remained an honorary member of BALEAP for the rest of his life.

One of the aims of the conference was to build bridges between different communities of practice. Management, testing, research, and technology each had a plenary and a panel discussion, and all are represented in this volume – though some more fully than others. Clare Furneaux from the University of Reading opened the conference with an entertaining historical overview of the 'State of the union: What union?' from the perspective of university management

(though no doubt coloured somewhat by her roots in EAP). Issues of EAP management figure prominently in two papers in the section on cross-institutional collaboration: Forbes, Butler and Heyns, who use the BALEAP TEAP Competency Framework as a basis for building a common language of teacher observation, and Wilding and Brewer, who call for more research and dialogue around EAP management – a need that will hopefully be addressed through one of BALEAP’s initial Special Interest Groups on the theme of Leadership and Management.

Glenn Fulcher from the University of Leicester closed the conference from the perspective of the language testing community with a consideration of ‘Cultivating language assessment literacy as collaborative CPD’. There are three papers on the theme of assessment and feedback in the second section of this volume, representing collaboration between EAP specialists and specialists in other areas (Van Geyte and Büttner; Caulton, Northcott and Gillies; Mason). There are also two assessment-related papers in the final section on student peer-to-peer collaboration (Preshous, Ostyn and Keng; Richardson, Humphries and Schutter).

Both the management and testing keynote papers can be found in this volume. Videos of the other keynotes can be viewed on the BALEAP website. Karl Maton from the University of Sydney crossed the bridge from his research community to explain how Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) could enable the union of theory and practice in EAP and empower students to achieve success in assessment by cracking the code of knowledge building in their disciplines. The LCT link between theory and praxis is explained in this volume by Cowley-

Haselden and Monbec – one of several papers to use the BALEAP JISMAIL discussion board to survey the BALEAP community.

Libor Štěpánek joined us from Masaryk University to show how the technology of the video conference can form part of a Creative Approach to Language Teaching (see BALEAP website for video). His use of technology brought us students not only from the Czech republic, but also from Argentina, Sweden, Finland and China. In the final section of this volume, Preshous, Ostyn and Keng describe a collaborative online learning project between pre-sessional students in the UK and business students in Belgium and Finland. Online learning also makes an appearance in three papers in Section II: from Barth, McKenna and Donnarumma, in the design of a large-scale online ESAP course, Mathew, Vincent and Nesi, who explain the collaborative creation and exploitation of an ELF corpus in Oman, and Caulton, Northcott and Gilles, who consider content language and structure in online feedback.

The papers in this volume paint a picture of the rich and complex landscape of EAP today. You will encounter a range of national contexts (UK, Ireland, Oman, Austria, Belgium, Finland, China); a variety of collaborators from students to employers – some of whom co-planned, co-presented and co-wrote the papers; varying degrees of collaboration drawing on different theoretical frameworks; a diversity of students, not only those who have English as an additional language; an array of skills (not just linguistic ones); and a range of delivery modes (transnational, online, 1:1 and group teaching).

After the two plenary papers, the volume is divided into four sections,

each representing a different type of collaboration: between institutions, between different areas of expertise, between staff and students, and, last but not least, between students themselves. In some cases, there were overlaps, and the final categorisation, with apologies to any authors who might disagree, inevitably reflects my own perspective as editor. In each section, there is a range of different purposes for the collaboration undertaken, which reflects the diverse roles of the EAP practitioner – research, needs analysis for course and materials design, 1:1 and group teaching, CPD, assessment, feedback, evaluation, and course and people management.

SECTION I: COLLABORATION BETWEEN INSTITUTIONS

Section I opens with three papers that used the BALEAP JISCmail discussion list to carry out inter-institutional surveys among the BALEAP community. The first two consider EAP as a discipline and the identity of the EAP practitioner. Cowley-Haselden and Monbec call on the EAP community to be more explicit in our conversations with each other and our students about the theory underpinning our practice, and to draw on LCT theory themselves in identifying a ‘need to acknowledge and build on what constitutes legitimate knowledge in EAP’. Smart then urges us to engage in conversation not with each other, but with other disciplines. His finding that such interdisciplinary collaboration takes place in 67.8% of the cases in his survey is reflected in the large number of papers in Section II that describe different models of collaborative working across disciplines, and outline the benefits and challenges involved. In the third paper in this section, Brewer and

Wilding used an inter-institutional survey to uncover the needs of EAP practitioners in leadership or management roles within our community, and recommended we establish a leadership and management network, as has happened in other comparable communities, such as IATEFL, AULC (and now ALDinHE). The final two papers in this section move from online to face-to-face collaboration across institutions. Senior staff from three UK institutions come together in Forbes, Butler and Heyns, and draw on the BALEAP TEAP Competency Framework to explore one challenge facing managers – that of establishing a common language to discuss performance and development needs during the teaching observation cycle. In the final paper in this section, Di Giallonardo also highlights the need for ‘candid conversations about assumptions regarding roles, and responsibilities, ownership, power, and knowledge’ as one of the lessons learnt from a transnational EAP collaboration between the UK and China.

SECTION II: COLLABORATION ACROSS AREAS OF EXPERTISE

The majority of papers fall into this section, and reflect the EAP practitioner’s desire to engage with experts in other areas in order to ensure a highly relevant student experience. The papers in this section move from course and materials design, through teaching, to assessment. They again involve both virtual and face-to-face collaborations, and include a number of different collaborators both within and outside of the university. Barth, McKenna and Donnarumma open the section with a consideration of the challenges involved in achieving ‘real’ collaboration with a professional association in the design of

a large-scale ESAP course. Mathew, Nesi and Vincent describe the role of colleagues in civil engineering in the creation and exploitation of an ELF corpus in Oman. Vermiere and Rewhorn involve both subject experts and students in the design of discipline-specific modular courses. Kletzenbauer and Moser bring together ESAP teachers from secondary and tertiary levels, university professors, industry representatives and students (both current and past) in a think-tank approach to needs analysis at the Department of Computing at a college in Austria. Moving to collaboration in teaching, Hawthorne and Cronin examine the effectiveness of team teaching in the context of collaboration with colleagues from Health and Human Sciences. Teale then explores the role of discipline-specific teaching assistants on a pre-sessional course. The final four papers in this section look at the value of partnerships at the level of assessment. Webster recommends that EAP practitioners look for opportunities to embed their practice in already-extant formative assessment processes within credit-bearing courses. The papers by Van Geyte and Büttner and by Caulton, Northcott and Gillies both address the language vs content issue in feedback on written assessments. The former uses collaborative research to inform 1:1 drop-in sessions. The latter considers the benefits to students and practitioners of collaboration between content and language specialists in online feedback. Finally, Mason clearly outlines the changing nature of collaboration at different stages of a test development project, with ‘active collaboration’ from experts in the areas of teaching, testing, administration and IT, and ‘passive collaboration’ from students.

SECTION III: COLLABORATION BETWEEN STAFF AND STUDENTS

Section III showcases staff–student partnerships in course design and evaluation, in teaching, and in feedback. The first four papers deal with course design and evaluation. Gazeley-Eke explains how the postgraduate student voice, both face-to-face and virtual, played a part in the redesign of an in-sessional Academic Skills support programme. Lee reports on ex-pre-sessional students’ observed and espoused application of lecture listening skills, and outlines the impact her findings have had on the listening strand of a pre-sessional course. Nunan and Runchman also tackle student difficulty with listening in their examination of pre-sessional student progress and needs. Edwards and Barakat then turn our attention to writing, and recommend drawing on student insights as part of a process of continuous curriculum enhancement, but warn against the exploitation of the student resource. Kavanagh reports on a model of good practice for staff–student partnership in a case study of a placement scheme funded by the Students’ Union, highlighting benefits for both Graduate Teaching Assistants and staff working alongside them in 1:1 academic skills sessions. In the final paper in this section, Grimley describes a two-stage process aimed at encouraging active student participation in feedback on written work.

SECTION IV: COLLABORATION BETWEEN STUDENTS

These three papers look at peer learning, both within one institution and across institutions through Online International

Learning. De Vries and Raffin give a frank report of the challenges involved in carrying out a mixed-methods study to explore impact and student views on a collaborative learning task in the often-neglected area of pronunciation. Richardson, Humphries and Schütter move us from teaching to assessment, and evaluate how a collaborative Lecture Investigation task can be used to develop institutional Graduate Attributes such as autonomy and teamwork. Finally, Preshous, Ostyn and Keng take us into the virtual realm of student collaboration across institutions, which results in not only the development of student intercultural competence, but also additional benefits at the level of institutions and staff – such as joint papers at conferences like this one.

As you read through these papers, you will come to appreciate the challenges involved in any form of collaboration – not least, the definition of the term itself. Certain of these challenges have the potential to threaten the mutual transformative learning that can result from a truly collaborative venture. If the power relationship is not addressed, then one party (the most powerful) will lose a learning opportunity. If assumptions are not explored, then communication will not be effective, leading once again to missed opportunities.

Most of the writers take the opportunity to reflect on the lessons learned from the less successful elements of their collaborative ventures, as well as laying out the benefits of collaboration for all involved. My purpose in organising this conference was to help others learn from each other. I have certainly learnt a lot through my collaboration with authors, reviewers and copy editor, Jean McCutcheon, in compiling this selection of

papers from the conference. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your part in that collaborative learning experience. I hope you enjoy reading the proceedings and continue to learn.