UNIVERSITY OF BATH

University of Bath

Rhetoric and realities: On the development of university-wide strategies to promote student English language growth

Katie Dunworth, University of Bath; Helen Drury, University of Sydney; Cynthia Kralik, Monash University; Tim Moore, Swinburne University

Corresponding author: Dr. Katie Dunworth, cmd45@bath.ac.uk, Tel: 0011441225384109

Abstract
This paper describes the results from a national project that investigated institutional approaches to the development of student English language capabilities in Australian higher education. The project aimed to identify the various approaches and strategies that higher education providers have established and gauge the whether they have been evaluated by those in the field as successful in attaining their objectives. The results of the study indicated that those institutions which were identified as successful had a number of elements in common; elements which were lacking in those universities which were considered as less effective. The paper concludes by identifying the key factors that were identified by project participants as being essential in the development of successful institution-wide strategies for promoting student language growth.

Key words
English language development, language proficiency, institution-wide strategy, academic literacy, higher education

Introduction
The extent to which students in Australian higher education are able to use the English language effectively in their academic endeavours has for some years been the subject of considerable attention from the scholarly literature, the media, and governing bodies. The unprecedented growth during the first decade of this century in the number of international students with English as an additional language has further fuelled interest in this issue. The focus of concern in the early and some of the more recent literature has thus been on the 'English language proficiency' of international students (Baird, 2010; Birrell, 2006; Bretag, 2007; Sawir, 2005), and the need to ensure that such students have the requisite English language skills and knowledge to undertake tertiary studies in Australia.

The introduction of a federal government agenda of widening participation, along with other factors, has broadened the debate to include different student cohorts , and added layers of complexity to the construct under discussion to incorporate the widespread recognition that the issue is not confined to second or additional language proficiency levels but concerns the capacity of all students to communicate effectively in an academic environment (e.g. Briguglio, 2012; Larcombe & Malkin, 2008). This has assisted in the 'normalization of diversity' (Beck, 2007, p. 684), and the development of a 'deficit-discourse shift' (Lawrence, 2005, p. 243) away from a view of difference as deficit and towards a conceptualisation of a university education as growth in the capacity to engage with the multiple discourses and literacies that exist in a higher education environment.

A different branch of the discussion that is of particular relevance to this paper is the consideration of student English language use and development in higher education from the perspective of university governance. The 'quasi-marketised environment' of higher education (Smith, 2006, p. 1), dominated by a managerial approach to higher education

governance in Australia, as elsewhere (Roberts, 2012) has meant a focus on the student as consumer (Smith, 2006), cost-cutting and efficiencies (Mok, 1999), measurable inputs and outcomes, and emphasis on the 'role of senior management, especially in providing leadership and direction for the organisation' (Milliken & Colohan, 2004, p. 383). This has seen student English language use reconceptualised as a graduate attribute, and student support as the provision of technical and discrete solutions (Smith, 2006).

The study described in this paper sought, inter alia, to identify the approaches and strategies that higher education providers have established in relation to a changing academic environment, and to gauge the whether they have been successful in achieving effective educational practices, as identified by those in the field. Conducted by a cross-institutional team from four universities (Curtin University, RMIT, Swinburne University and the University of Sydney), and funded by a grant from the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching, the study ran over a period of 18 months, and collected data from a number of sources, as described below. There were two particular areas of focus for the study: the use of post-entry English language assessment tools to analyse language need; and the provision of strategies and activities to enhance student language development for all students, regardless of enrolment status or language background. This paper focuses on the second of these objectives.

Background

While the issue of student English language use, as indicated in the introduction above, has been a consistent topic in the literature on higher education, much of the literature on the need for universities to take responsibility for the effectiveness of their students' communication in English has focused on setting appropriate English language entry requirements. Research into English language proficiency scores, as obtained, for example, through the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) has, however, reported mixed findings over a number of years (e.g. Graham, 1987; Ingram & Bayliss, 2007; Light, Xu, & Mossop, 1987; Oliver, Vanderford, & Grote, 2012; Phakiti, 2008; Rochecouste, Oliver, Mulligan, & Davies, 2010) that call into question the capacity of initial English language proficiency levels to predict academic success. Nevertheless, there is general agreement in the literature that there is a certain threshold level of English language proficiency, below which students are unlikely to have the language resources necessary to undertake tertiary study. One challenge for institutions is how to set the threshold level when there is an array of pathways that English as an additional language students can take to be admitted to a university course (Feast, 2002; Murray & Arkoudis, 2013; O'Loughlin & Murray, 2007) as well as the possibility of applicants using test taking strategies which may give a false impression of their proficiency (Murray, 2010).

This emphasis on institutional gatekeeping for students who have English as an additional language has, however, shifted during the last five years towards consideration of graduate capabilities, driven at least in part by a quality assurance agenda set by government 'moving ahead of the university system' (Massaro, 2010, p. 22); one which included a major review of higher education (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008). The review report promoted a focus on 'standards and outcomes' in contrast to the emphasis on 'inputs and processes' that had until then predominated in the work of the Australian Universities Quality Agency, the university quality assurance regulator at the time (Massaro, 2010, p. 22).

With regard to language in particular, a national symposium in 2007, organised by government agencies and attended by representatives from higher education institutions

across the country, captured the prevailing zeitgeist. A discussion paper prepared for it (Arkoudis & Starfield, 2007) identified a range of activities for enhancing student language use; and the final report (Australian Education International [AEI], 2007, pp 17-18) recommended institutional action with regard to diagnostic testing, embedded language support, quality assurance, research and inter-institutional collaboration. That 2007 symposium led to the development of the *Good Practice Principles for English language proficiency for international students in Australian universities* (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR] 2009). This document, as well as providing a definition of English language proficiency and affirming the importance of proficiency for academic achievement for all students, proposed a number of institution-based measures to achieve this, and provided a major impetus for change (Fenton-Smith, 2012). Subsequently the *Good Practice Principles* were developed into a set of standards for higher education, the English Language Standards for Higher Education (AALL 2010). While the latter were not taken up through government offices, they did inform the development of terms of reference of the Australian quality assurance body, the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Authority (TEQSA) for the assessment of English language proficiency. The TEQSA terms of reference emphasise English language proficiency as a key graduate attribute for all students regardless of enrolment status or language background, and stress the responsibility of institutions for ensuring that students have the language competency to be successful in their studies, and have practices in place to develop students' English language proficiency throughout their courses of study (TEQSA, 2013).

Papers prepared for a follow-up national symposium in 2013 revisited the issues raised in the earlier symposium and acknowledged that progress had been made in the areas of post entry assessment and development (Dunworth, 2013; Murray & Arkoudis, 2013), and language proficiency for workplace readiness and employment (Humphreys & Gribble, 2013). However, the final report (AEI, 2013) stressed the continued need for the dissemination of good practice at the level of institutional strategy and policy, as well as curriculum and learning and teaching. It also called for further research, such as large scale tracking studies of student success via entry pathway, longitudinal and inter-institutional research on embedding of language development in the disciplines and the development of English language outcomes and associated measurements that are integrated into graduate attributes and indicate both readiness for employment and further study.

While there are already some examples in the literature of the implementation of and research into institutional approaches to student language development (Barrett-Lennard, Chalmers, & Longnecker, 2011; Humphreys, Haugh, Fenton-Smith, Lobo, Michael, & Walkinshaw, 2012), little has been published to guide institutions towards the development of an institutional approach. The project described in this paper sought to do just that: to offer a way forward for institutions to develop a sustainable, strategic and whole of institution approach to the issue of all students' English language capabilities. To this end, a set of broad conditions are proposed later in this paper based on questionnaire, interview and case study data collected across the university sector.

Research Methodology
As the review of the literature in this paper has emphasised, an understanding of English language development in higher education involves multiple layers of knowledge. Given this, it was believed that the most appropriate theoretical framework for the project would be that of pragmatism, which views social phenomena as multifaceted and multidimensional (Feilzer, 2010; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003), and seeks out in practice solutions to posed

questions. A study within this paradigm is conducted from the perspective that knowledge is socially situated within the reality of the experienced world, and that it is always tentative and subject to change over time (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Pragmatism is often associated with the use of mixed methods because it is not bound to any specific methodological approach, and this was the approach chosen for this study. A key concern was that a more complete picture could be formed than would result from the use of a single method because of the capacity of mixed methods of 'building on initial findings using contrasting kinds of data' (Denscombe, 2008, p. 272).

Using this rationale, three main data collection were selected: surveys, semi-structured interviews and case studies, with publicly available texts providing further contributing data and supporting information. Such texts included institutional websites, quality audit reports, official information from government departments and the *My University* website, and internal reports. The survey data were collected through online questionnaires submitted via email invitation to over 600 potential key informants in all universities in Australia. They included language and learning professionals, deans or directors of teaching and learning, and senior managers. While it was intended that all recipients would have the opportunity to complete the survey, it was expected that senior managerial staff within an institution would pass the survey to the person deemed most 'relevant' in their institution, thereby reducing the likelihood of a high response rate. A total of 173 respondents commenced the survey (approximately 28 per cent), but some of these were incomplete or contained non-useable information, leaving 132 surveys for analysis. This number included responses from 37 of Australia's 39 universities, and between one and seven survey responses from each of those institutions. Asked to name their role in the institution, 54 respondents stated that they were learning advisors or communication unit coordinators; 12 were associate deans teaching and learning or equivalent; five were senior managers at pro vice-chancellor level or above; and four were heads of School or Department. The remaining respondents either clicked the option of preferring not to say or omitted the question.

The survey included questions on post-entry language assessment instruments in use in universities, language development policies and their implementation, and the kinds of strategies and activities respondents' institutions had in place to assist students to develop their language use. The survey concluded with some open-ended questions designed to elicit more general information about respondents' views on their institution's approach to student language development.

The interviews, which were held with 20 of the survey respondents who had indicated a willingness to participate, were focused on elaborating on themes identified in the surveys, on corroborating facts, or on developing topics essential to the project's deliverables but which had not emerged through the survey data – specifically, activities or strategies which could be described as 'good practice', and ways of evaluating strategies to enhance language development.

The third data collection strategy involved ethnographic case studies at four universities. This stage was intended to produce 'insider' information that could help develop more in-depth understanding of institutional approaches to student English language development in a tertiary context. The researchers in each institution sought to address the same four questions:
- What is the institution's approach to language assessment and development, and by what process did it come into being?

- What are the factors that facilitate the development of an effective language assessment and development approach, strategy or activity?
- What are the barriers to developing an effective overall approach to language assessment and development or specific activity?
- What constitutes effectiveness of the approach to language assessment and development in the context of the individual institution?

Data sources in each institution were expected to vary, but were expected to include internal policy and strategy documents, quality audit and other evaluative reports, meeting minutes, website content, focus group interviews with staff or students, field notes and researcher reflections. Each researcher was responsible for identifying themes at his or her own institution, following which the findings were collated and further analysed to produce the key themes that applied across institutions, as well as those that were institution-specific. This whole process was intended to ensure that the findings were not limited by the shortcomings of any single data collection strategy, but were as robust as possible.

Results

From the data, three categories of university were identified: those which already had in place a centrally coordinated approach to English language assessment and development, or which were in the process of developing or implementing one (an institution-wide approach); those which had some kind of faculty-based or school-based approach in place (a devolved approach); and those which appeared not to have considered the issue in any depth from an organisational perspective, the latter being the most widespread. Each of these approaches is described in more detail below. For the purposes of the study, the key elements that helped define an 'institution-wide approach' were the explicit, articulated decision to take a whole-of-institution approach to the issue, the involvement in the policy creation and implementation phases of senior managerial staff, and participation in the implementation of the approved strategy of a range of staff beyond the academic language and learning unit.

The results of the study indicated that there was a clear relationship between the degree to which a university had undertaken to implement an institution-wide approach and the extent to which participants were positive in their responses. For example, in one instance the approach was described as '*pioneering and innovative*', and in another, as '*highly valued and highly regarded*'. Factors which were identified by participants as contributing to their positive viewpoint included the integration of '*top down and bottom up strategies*', the commitment of resources, a sense of overall coordination and '*strong support from the VC down*'. This involvement of high level leaders, in some cases the vice chancellor and in others deputy vice chancellors, along with their willingness to engage with relevant staff, appeared to be key elements in establishing an approach that was associated with positive and supportive responses from participants. This applied, too, in cases where plans were under way to implement a university-wide strategy, but where it was too early to say how successful such endeavours were likely to be. As one participant commented: '*Until recently [academic language and learning services] had no academic champion within the Senior Executive. This has now changed and there is hope of effective change being driven*'.

With regard to the second category, the devolved approach, informants described activities managed at faculty or departmental level. Comments in this category were mixed, with some participants expressing reservations; emphasising, for example, that area-based approaches were the consequence of the failure of efforts to establish effective programs at the larger university level, or of dissatisfaction with the central service available to their students, or of

inadequate across-the-board resourcing. For these participants, faculty-level initiatives were insufficient. As one participant commented: '*The challenge for institutions is to bring these related activities together into a single coherent strategy … This however often feels like "a bridge too far", and it is hard to feel optimistic about outcomes in this regard'*. Concerns were expressed by these participants about the problems of fragmentation and unproductive competition between areas, as described below, as well as the duplication of resources.

Other participants, however, expressed enthusiasm for the kinds of practices that could emerge from a faculty-based approach, particularly where curriculum embedding had taken place, and where language and learning advisors worked collaboratively with discipline-based academics. As one participant stated: '*What has been important is that these unit offerings are owned by the Faculty, with co-designing, co-teaching, co-assessing with [academic language and learning] specialists'*. Activities which were reported included the collaborative design of assessments, lecture sessions targeted at the discourse demands of the discipline, the development of a system of referral for students requiring additional work on their writing, the conducting of joint research between language and learning advisors and discipline staff related to the program, the use of discipline-specific post-entry language assessments, and units that were strongly content driven but which included an additional focus on language. It appeared from these data that more devolved approaches worked most effectively at a practical level when there was mutual recognition of the expertise brought to the venture of both disciplinary academics and language specialists.

In contrast, participants from universities where there was no evidence of a coordinated approach (which constituted the single largest group) tended to be negative in their comments, with approaches or strategies being variously described as '*ad hoc'*, '*fragmented'*, '*patchy at best'*, '*mostly piecemeal'*, '*reactive and stuttering'* and '*desperately underfunded'*. Some informants in this group indicated that instances of good practice were evident in their institutions, but too often these were isolated cases only (e.g. '*the small things happening at [University X] are representative of very good practice. They just need to be happening on a wider scale, and happening more systematically'*). Some informants were especially critical of the tendency for institutions to make claims about their investment in the area, while failing to deliver both in terms of commitment and resourcing; comments including: '*there is a lot of lip service paid about the need to develop English language proficiency, but institutional support [is lacking], so programs struggle'*; '*English language development is supposed to be important but, in reality, too little is done, and what is done is too late'*; and '*Plenty of rhetoric'*. In several instances, participants appeared to be highly frustrated by the situation, one participant encapsulating the views of several: '*In my university, I would describe the approach as appalling, the philosophy non-existent and the current situation in crisis with regard to English language development'*. In short, the less participants believed that an overarching, strategic approach was in place, the less likely they were to express satisfaction with their institution's approach.

Sources of dissatisfaction and concern

Because of the high level of dissatisfaction with current approaches that emerged from the study, this paper highlights below some of the issues that were identified as a major source of discontent. While participants generally agreed about the need for institutions to develop a university-wide approach to student language development, many participants commented – both in the survey and the interviews – on the factors that made it difficult to achieve successful outcomes in this area. Numerous observations were made around this broad issue

that attested both to a strong desire on the part of informants to see improved language policy and programs within their institutions, and also to concerns they had about the capacities of their respective institutions to respond effectively to the challenges of students' language and literacy development. From the data, three areas of concern of particular relevance to this paper were identified: leadership issues; resource issues and stakeholder issues. Each of these areas is discussed in some detail below.

Leadership issues

A number of participants expressed frustration at the lack of a framework for sustainable progress in the area, and the absence of ongoing leadership. A number of participants identified the challenges posed by these changing management structures and changes in senior staff. As one person stated: '*Our strategy has suffered from a lack of consistent leadership. Initially the driver was our Office of Teaching and Learning supervised by the [Deputy Vice-Chancellor], but changes in personnel in that area led to a an almost total loss of interest in student language development at senior levels'*. This was seen as particularly problematic when institutions were embarked on a deliberate process to develop a cross-university approach to language development.

Others commented on the difficulty of getting a consistent perspective around academic language and learning issues in their universities, even, in some cases, when an institution-wide approach had commenced. For example, one person commented: '*Two years after approval by Academic Board, it was as if [our language proficiency policy] had never been introduced. Nobody appeared to have heard of it. All key players had changed'*.

On the other hand, some participants, while noting instability at the top, perceived this as a fact of life that could be overcome by ensuring that, as one person put it '*any strategic approach we came up with should go through the committee system and get written into our policies and procedures. That way, even if there are staff changes there would be continuity of approach, and thus sustainability'*. Hope was also expressed that pressure from external bodies, such as TEQSA, would have the effect of forcing university leaders to develop more informed and enduring approaches to the issue.

Resource issues

Classified in this paper as a resource issue, although it can also be viewed as associated with overall management, is the 'project' basis by which academic language and learning initiatives are increasingly being organised and resourced within institutions. This was also seen as problematic. The study identified a variety of initiatives organised on this basis, including projects created to develop university wide post-entry language assessment; to develop online resources; and to implement programs of curriculum embedding. Whilst such initiatives were sometimes seen as a sign of some commitment on the part of the institution to develop these areas, the concern expressed was that such projects are often short-lived, and usually fail to get any real traction within the broader processes of the university. As one person explained: '*The very word "project" goes against the notion of sustainability, with its emphasis on the temporary and bounded'*. Some also expressed the view that projects were being used by university leaders to give the appearance of action on the issue but without having to commit to long term, sustainable approaches.

> *Upper management are far too enthusiastic about programs that patch things up, and do not recognise the need to seriously fund long running and successful programs, rather than dropping a program after a year and reinventing the wheel continuously.*

Inadequate resourcing, both in terms of staffing and funding, was the area of concern most commented on by participants; in some cases in relation to the project status of activities, but in others as a general observation about provision for all language development activities. Comments included: '*our teaching and learning unit has been understaffed for years*'; and '*we just do not have the staff to adequately run the programs that need to happen*'. Some participants were very critical indeed. As one person commented: '*The current support for English language development shows a lack of respect and regard at all levels: the institution, the faculty, the academic staff and the students*'. The belief was widely expressed, too, that resources had not increased to keep pace with the growth in enrolments of international students and students from low socio-economic backgrounds. Some participants argued that greater evidence of need for increased resources was required, and suggested that learning advisors should use the results of post-entry language assessments, analysis of academic results and attrition rates to demonstrate need. Others expressed the belief that responsibility lay with the leadership, and that there was an educational and ethical responsibility to stand by the institutional rhetoric. For example, one person stated that '*If universities make certain claims about their students having high level communication skills at graduation – including English language skills – then this has to be backed up by a systematic effort to develop these during the course of a degree*'.

Stakeholder issues

Some considerable discontent was expressed by participants about the tendency for institutions to adopt top-down, managerial approaches that excluded those 'on the ground', which it appeared had led to a certain amount of conflict or non-cooperation among stakeholders. It was suggested that an inclusive and consultative approach was not only necessary to ensure effective working relations between different participants , but also that consulting with those actually engaged in academic language and learning work with students and staff provided a necessary 'reality check' about the feasibility of proposed initiatives in the area:

> *University administrations really need to consult closely with [academic language and learning] professionals not only in the development of policy but also in the ways that policy is enacted. The great contribution that practitioners can make in these processes is a very keen sense of what is likely to work, and what is likely to be a waste of time and resources.*

In addition, a sense of unhealthy rivalry or conflict was reported between different areas within an institution which were involved in some way in language development activities. Participants identified a variety of institutional fault lines that impeded the development of a unified and coherent approach. These included tensions between central and faculty-based operations, between discipline specialists and academic language and learning providers (some disciplinary specialists viewing language development as being outside their remit or the involvement of learning advisors as an unwanted intrusion on their programs), and between the different providers of language education. The latter was described as '*a particularly contentious issue*' with regard to the increasing involvement of previously traditionally pre-university English language units in the formulation and implementation of academic language and learning strategies within their universities. One difficulty was the status differential (for example, one person explained that '*In our university, the academic language and learning staff are academics who teach academic literacy and undertake research, while the [English language]teachers are sessional, teach [English as a foreign*

language] and are paid at [different award] rates'), but another was the distinctness of the paradigms within which the different areas operate, leading to a tendency to conceive of the needs of different student cohorts in quite separate terms. This, it was suggested, has led to separate ways of addressing issues, and also to the pursuit of separate agendas by different units with the university. One informant thought the way to overcome this fragmentation and rivalry was to seek to '*join the dots*' between different areas of need, and to link them under the umbrella of sound teaching for all students. Indeed, those institutions described as most successful had a permanent steering group or advisory committee with representation from across areas.

These broad areas of dissatisfaction and concern described in this section were expressed by multiple participants, and highlight the challenges and dichotomies inherent in current approaches to higher education. The inadequacy of the leadership provided by senior managers is a major issue in a system in which they are the repositories of power and authority, and it is unsurprising that the approaches judged as more successful by participants appeared to align more closely with the idea of distributed leadership (Bento, 2011; Jones, Lefoe, Harvey, & Ryland, 2012) which can incorporate participation at all levels without precluding co-existence with hierarchical leadership (Gosling, Bolden, & Petrov, 2009). Concern about the inadequacy of resources, too, exemplifies the shortcomings of an approach that is centred on cost-cutting and 'efficiencies' that disguise the issue of reduced state funding by highlighting the financial autonomy of individual institutions (Smith, 2006). In addition, clashes between stakeholders are not unexpected in a context in which they are presented as providers of competing 'services' for their student consumers (see Jacklin & Le Riche, 2009, for an analysis of the framing of student support).

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to suggest that the situation across the sector is one only of gloom and frustration. Along with some of the less hopeful developments described above, a number of 'success stories' also emerged from the study's investigations, which suggest that with the right approach and people involved, positive outcomes are certainly possible. A way forward is proposed in the following section of this paper.

Towards an effective institutional approach
The data obtained from participants on the approaches to student language development within their institutions point to a number of factors that contribute to the achieving of positive outcomes. The extended account of one survey respondent, reproduced below, encapsulates many of these factors, and gives cause for optimism.

> *[Our institution] has seen the development of a whole-of-university approach to support all students' language and learning development. It started with the [Vice-Chancellor] initiating a review and audit of all support services in the area of language and learning. This ran for two years, leading to a report which was endorsed by Academic Board and the [Vice Chancellor]. The report was quite sound in its approach recommending, among other things, that language and leaning support be embedded in curriculum and assessment; that Faculty staff be provided with teacher training support in order to be able to do this in collaboration with language and learning staff; that language and learning form part of core faculty based programs, and that a community of practice involving all staff who provide language and learning be established to support these activities across the University. Overall it has been an approach that has combined top-down down*

direction and funding, with bottom-up decision making and implementation by [academic language and learning] staff.

In particular, this vignette summarises a number of key issues identified by many participants as important, as described earlier in this paper: the contribution of sound theoretical understandings in the formulation of policy; careful planning; ongoing interest and direction from senior management; and the investing of responsibility in staff with the expertise to design and implement the program.

Drawing on the data described above – both positive and negative – eight key success factors were identified from the project that appeared to be crucial in the development of an institution-wide approach that is seen by stakeholders as effective.

- Leadership - It appeared essential that a strategy should be overseen by a senior positional leader, and should involve his or her continued involvement in driving policy, promoting consultation and engaging appropriate stakeholders.
- Expertise – The data indicated that a viable strategy requires the involvement of both disciplinary and language experts, as well as competent leadership.
- Consultation – Greatest support for their institution's approach was found among participants who believed that they had been consulted in the development and implementation of their strategy. Conversely, those who felt that relevant stakeholders had been excluded were most likely to be critical of their institution.
- Time – Associated with the concept of sustainability, participants were concerned that sufficient time should be allocated to the implementation of any innovation; the project approach militates against this.
- Unity – As described above, tensions between different stakeholders was a major barrier to effective practice, while mutual recognition of the expertise that different stakeholders could bring, particularly when translated into collaboration, was identified as a positive factor.
- Resourcing – The need for adequate resourcing to develop a sustainable institutional strategy was a dominant issue.
- Educational integrity – Approaches that were perceived to be theoretically defensible, guided by evidence and scholarly in approach were highly valued.
- Sustainability – The project basis of many of the approaches was believed to be unsustainable, and contrasted with approaches in which initiatives had been integrated into the daily operations of the institution.

The focus on the English language use of tertiary students has gained an unprecedented level of prominence in Australia. Government agencies and departments, peak body associations, the professions and higher education sector have all contributed to what has been an active debate over the last few years culminating in calls for action by Australian universities. The project reported in this paper therefore came at a time when the tertiary sector is still coming to terms with such pressure and grappling with finding evidence-based options to assist them in developing appropriate language development opportunities for their students.

The findings indicated that there are a number of ways by which institutions are currently seeking to address the issue of student English language development, and that participants believed that there were many strategies or approaches in place which could be described as good practice. At the same time, there was an overwhelming sense that a whole of institution approach was the most effective way of achieving progress, and that the key factors identified

in this paper were essential to attaining satisfactory outcomes. The focus of this paper has been, therefore, on encouraging change at an institutional level. However, as the outcomes of initiatives adopted by the tertiary sector begin to unfold, more specific research into the ways in which these approaches can be or have been evaluated will help identify which approaches, strategies and models of post-entry language assessment and development are the most effective, sustainable and lead to measurably enhanced use of English in an academic context.

References

AEI [Australian Education International]. (2007). *Outcomes from a national symposium: English language competence of international students.* ACT: Commonwealth of Australia.

AEI. (2013). *Five years on: English language competence of international students. Outcomes Report June 2013.* Retrieved from https://www.ieaa.org.au/documents/item/54

AALL [Association for Academic Language and Learning] (2010). *English language standards for higher education.* Retrieved from http://www.aall.org.au/sites/default/files/FinalEnglishLanguageStandardsMay2012.pdf

Arkoudis, S., & Starfield, S. (2007). *In-course language development and support.* A discussion paper for a National Symposium: English Language Competence of International Students, August 2007. Retrieved from http://aei.dest.gov.au/aei/shop/products/publications/publication624

Baird, B. (2010). *Stronger, simpler, smarter ESOS: supporting international students. Review of the Educational Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act, 2000.* ACT: Commonwealth of Australia.

Barrett-Lennard, S., Chalmers, D., & Longnecker, N. (2011). Embedding communication skills across the curriculum: Helping students into their degrees and out into the workplace. *First Year in Higher Education Conference*, Fremantle, Western Australia.

Beck, U. (2007). Beyond class and nation: Reframing social inequalities in a globalizing world. *British Journal of Sociology 58*, 679–705.

Bento, F. (2011). A discussion about power relations and the concept of distributed leadership in higher education institutions. *The Open Education Journal, 4*, 17-23.

Birrell, B. (2006). Implications of low English standards among overseas students at Australian universities. *People and Place, 14*, 53-64.

Bradley, D., Noonan, P., Nugent, H., & Scales, B. (2008). *Review of Australian Higher Education. Final Report.* Canberra: DEEWR.

Bretag, T. (2007). The Emperor's new clothes: yes, there is a link between English language competence and academic standards. *People and Place*, 15, 13-21.

Briguglio, C. (2012). Embedding language development across the curriculum. Paper presented at the *Australian International Education Conference*, 2-5 October, 2012, Melbourne. Retrieved from http://www.aiec.idp.com/pdf/2012_Briguglio_Fri_1115_217.pdf

Cresswell, J. (2008). *Educational Research*. (3rd ed.). New Jersey: Pearson Education.

DEEWR [Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations]. (2009). *Good practice principles for English language proficiency for international students in Australian universities.* Retrieved from www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Publications/Documents/Final_Report-Good_Practice_Principles.pdf.

Denscombe, M. (2008). Communities of practice: A research paradigm for the mixed methods approach. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 2*, 270-283.

Dunworth, K. (2013). In-course student English language development. In *Five years on: English language competence of international students. Outcomes Report June 2013*

Discussion paper 2. 52-74. Australian Education International and International Education Association of Australia. Retrieved from https://www.ieaa.org.au/documents/item/54

Feast, V. (2002). The impact of IELTS scores on performance at university. *International Education Journal, 3*, 70-85.

Feilzer, M. Y. (2010). Doing mixed methods research pragmatically: Implications for the rediscovery of pragmatism as a research paradigm. *Journal of Mixed Method Research, 4*, 6-16.

Fenton-Smith, B. (2012). Facilitating self-directed learning amongst international students of health sciences: The dual discourse of self-efficacy. *Journal of Academic Language and Learning, 6*, A64-A76.

Gosling, J., Bolden, R., & Petrov, G. (2009). Distributed leadership in higher education: What does it accomplish? *Leadership, 5*, 299-310.

Graham, J. (1987). English language proficiency and the prediction of academic success. *TESOL Quarterly, 21*, 505-522.

Humphreys, P. & Gribble, C. (2013). Outcomes - English Language and the transition to work or further study. In *Five years on: English language competence of international students. Outcomes Report June 2013 Discussion paper 3.* 77-97. Australian Education International and International Education Association of Australia. Retrieved from https://www.ieaa.org.au/documents/item/54

Humphreys, P., Haugh, M., Fenton-Smith, B., Lobo, A., Michael, R., & Walkinshaw, I. (2012). Tracking international students' English proficiency over the first semester of undergraduate study. *IELTS Research Reports Online Series 1/2012.* Retrieved from http://www.ielts.org/researchers/research.aspx.

Ingram, D. & Bayliss, A. (2007). IELTS as a predictor of academic language performance. *IELTS Research Reports*, Volume 7. British Council and IELTS Australia Pty Limited.

Jacklin, A. & Le Riche, P. (2009). Reconceptualising student support: From 'support' to 'supportive'. *Studies in Higher Education, 34*, 735-749.

Johnson, R. B., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational Researcher, 33*, 14-26.

Jones, S., Lefoe, G., Harvey, M., & Ryland, K. (2012). Distributed leadership: A collaborative frameworbarrettk for academics, executives and professionals in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 34*, 67-78.

Larcombe, W., & Malkin, I. (2008). Identifying students likely to benefit from language support in first-year law. *Higher Education Research and Development, 27*, 319-329.

Lawrence, J. (2005). Addressing diversity in higher education: Two models for facilitating student engagement and mastery. Paper presented at the *Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia Conference,* Sydney. Retrieved from: http://conference.herdsa.org.au/2005/author_index.cfm.html

Light, R., Xu, M. & Mossop, J. (1987). English proficiency and academic performance of international students. *TESOL Quarterly, 21*, 251-261.

Massaro, V. (2010). Cui bono? The relevance and impact of quality assurance. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 32*, 17-26.

Milliken, J., & Colohan, G. (2004). Quality or control? Management in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 26*, 381-391.

Mok, K. H. (1999). The cost of managerialism: The implications for the 'McDonaldisation' of higher education in Hong Kong. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 21*, 117-127.

Murray, D. & Arkoudis, S. (2013). In-course student English language development. In *Five years on: English language competence of international students. Outcomes Report June 2013 Discussion paper 1.* 23-51 Australian Education International and International

Education Association of Australia. Retrieved from
https://www.ieaa.org.au/documents/item/54

Murray, N. (2010). Conceptualising the English language needs of first year university students. *The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education, 1,* 55-64.

Oliver, R., Vanderford, S. & Grote, E. (2012). Evidence of English language proficiency and academic achievement of non-English-speaking background students. *Higher Education Research and Development, 31,* 541-555.

O'Loughlin, K. & Murray, D. (2007). Pathways – Preparation and selection: A discussion paper for a National Symposium: English Language Competence of International Students, August 14, 2007, Sydney, Australia. Australian Education International and International Education Association of Australia. Retrieved from
https://www.aei.gov.au/research/Publications/Documents/NS_PathwaysPreperationSelection.pdf

Phakiti, A. (2008). Predicting NESB international postgraduate students' academic achievement : a structural equation modeling approach. *International Journal of Applied Educational Studies*, 3, 18-38.

Roberts, P. (2012). *Support services for international university students: An Australian case study*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Curtin University, Western Australia.

Rochecouste, J., Oliver, R., Mulligan, D., & Davies, M. (2010). *Addressing the ongoing language growth of international students*. Final report to the ALTC. Retrieved from:
http://www.altc.edu.au/project-addressing-ongoing-english-monash-2007

Sawir, E. (2005). Language difficulties of international students in Australia: The effects of prior learning experience. *International Education Journal 6*, 567-580.

Smith, R. (2006). *An overview of research on student support: Helping students to achieve or achieving institutional targets? Nurture or de-nature?* Retrieved from:
http://wlv.openrepository.com/wlv/handle/2436/7588

Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (Eds.), (2003). *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

TEQSA [Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency] (2013). *Quality Assessment: English language proficiency. Terms of Reference*. Australian Government. Retrieved from
http://www.teqsa.gov.au/for-providers/quality-assessments