Archived at the Flinders Academic Commons:

http://dspace.flinders.edu.au/dspace/

'This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Müller, A., Arbon, P. and Gregoric, C. (2015) 'A school-based approach to developing the English proficiency of EAL university students.' Journal of Academic Language and Learning, 9(2) A63-A78.

which has been published in final form at:

http://journal.aall.org.au/index.php/jall/article/view/338

Made available with permission of the publisher.

AALL
Association for Academic
Language and Learning

A school-based approach to developing the English proficiency of EAL university students

Amanda Müller, Paul Arbon & Carolyn Gregoric

School of Nursing & Midwifery, Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia

Email: amanda.muller@flinders.edu.au

This paper provides a case study of a school-based approach to language de-velopment and support for English as an additional language (EAL) students within the School of Nursing & Midwifery at Flinders University. The case study addresses the need for greater knowledge about different organisa-tional approaches to EAL support within tertiary education. While there are numerous university-wide and faculty-based programs and support for EAL students, school-based approaches are much less common. The paper out-lines the context from which the decision to employ an English for specific purposes (ESP) academic within the school emerged. The initial response and modifications made as a greater understanding of student and staff needs and preferences developed are outlined. Along with the role and activities of the ESP academic, challenges are also discussed.

Key Words: English for specific purposes; academic language and learning; English as an additional language; English proficiency; academic literacies; school-based approaches.

1. Introduction

With increasing numbers of English as an additional language (EAL) students, English language proficiency is an issue not only for universities, but also for graduates' subsequent professional practice. The post-entry development of English language and communication skills is a great concern in the tertiary sector, particularly for international students who have English as a sec-ond or other language (Universities Australia, 2013).

There have been various approaches implemented within Australian universities to support EAL students, including the establishment of centralised and faculty-based programs and units to provide academic skills and language development (Barthel, 2013). A model for understanding the nature of collaborations between academic language and learning (ALL) staff, faculty staff, and students is offered by Jones, Bonanno and Sculler (2001). They present a continuum which categorises activities from adjunct (with either a weak or strong context-specific focus) through to integrated and then embedded activities. According to this classification system, adjunct ac-tivities are provided in addition to a student's course, integrated activities occur as a component with a workshop or lecture, and embedding results in courses being organised around the devel-opment of academic literacy.

The focusing of academic language and learning (ALL) support within a faculty can be taken beyond the centralised and faculty level discussed by Jones, Bonanno and Sculler (2001) to the level of the school or department. Although it is rare to find such cases reported in the literature, the greatest degree of decentralisation occurs when ALL support is permanently placed within a single school to provide a full-time service for a number of ALL duties, including integrating language development into the curriculum. The school-based approach enables all learning and support materials to be closely targeted and tailored to suit the student cohort's needs, with a

narrowly defined set of ALL skills to be mastered. Such an approach is possible when a large number of EAL students are clustered within a single school.

This paper provides an illustrative case study of one school-based intervention involving the employment of an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) academic within the School of Nursing & Midwifery, Flinders University. The term 'English for Specific Purposes' includes sub-areas such as 'Nursing English' and 'English for Academic Purposes' (a term which overlaps heavily with ALL). For further understanding of the term 'English for Specific Purposes' see Gillet (2011).

2. Background to this case study

Flinders University is an Australian university with over 23,000 students spread across a number of metropolitan campuses in Adelaide, and smaller regional and interstate locations. In total, there are over 3,900 international students enrolled in on-shore and off-shore courses. The School of Nursing & Midwifery is located within the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences. The school attracts many international students and this cohort now comprises over 20% of students within the school. The international student population includes many Asian students.

Currently, generic and discipline-specific academic and English language support is available to all students (EAL or not) within the School of Nursing & Midwifery. These services are provided at no additional cost to students and participation is voluntary. Students have access to generic ALL support provided by a centralised unit to every student enrolled at the university. Academic advisors within the centralised unit provide support of a generalist nature via workshops, printed and online resources, and just-in-time individual consultations. More recently, and the subject of this paper, the cohort of EAL undergraduate nursing and midwifery students have further been supported by an ESP academic to develop English proficiency for their academic studies and clinical placements. The ESP academic is occasionally assisted by an experienced registered nurse employed on a sessional basis who provides workshops focussing on clinical communications and medical terminology.

International EAL nursing students face challenges associated with adjusting to the language and culture, as well as developing ALL and clinical competencies. The literature indicates that improving the communicative competence of EAL students is a common area of concern among nursing schools internationally (Crawford & Candlin, 2013; Hansen & Beaver, 2012; Kilstoff & Baker, 2006; Olson, 2012; Scheele, Pruit, Johnson, & Xu, 2011; Starr, 2009). The most effective English development classes provided to EAL nursing students are those which are context-specific and include medical terminology (Starr, 2009).

2.1. English proficiency and regulatory requirements

Context and need have driven the move toward a school-based method of EAL student development at Flinders University and, as such, the first part of the paper is devoted to outlining the push factors and the context in which the decision was made to adopt this approach. Thus, we will start with an understanding of the wider regulatory environment.

International education is important to the Australian economy, being the fourth largest export industry in 2013 (Universities Australia 2013, p. 10). As such, 29% of students are from overseas, coming mostly from Asia, and this percentage is higher than the OECD average of 7.8% (Universities Australia, 2013, pp. 8, 26). The quality of education in Australian universities tends to be high, with over half the universities ranking among the top 5% in the world (Universities Australia, 2013, p. 8). To maintain this high standing, Australian universities must comply with a number of forms of regulation, auditing, and quality assurance from external bodies, notably the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) and the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council (ANMAC). This section will briefly discuss some of the English proficiency standards of these two bodies.

TEQSA uses a Higher Education Standards Framework to evaluate and accredit courses. This includes Provider Course Accreditation Standard 1.2 which requires the course to "provide for appropriate development of key graduate attributes in students including English language proficiency"; Provider Course Accreditation Standard 3.2 which asks for sufficient language competency "to participate effectively in the course of study"; and Provider Course Accreditation Standard 5.6 which requires the provider to demonstrate that "students who complete the course of study have attained key graduate attributes including an appropriate level of English language proficiency" (Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education, 2011, pp. 14, 15, 17).

Furthermore, professional regulatory bodies such as ANMAC assess and recommend accreditation of university courses to higher bodies, for example, the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA). Since English proficiency is an important consideration in the professional workplace, the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act (2010) enables the NMBA to determine the acceptable level of English proficiency for registration as a nurse or midwife. Currently, an IELTS score of 7.0 or an OET score of B in all bands is required for Australian health professional registration. Since many universities allow students to enter at IELTS 6.0 or 6.5, graduate EAL students who wish to register for professional practice must meet an English standard higher than that which allowed them to commence study.

While the evidence shows that a reasonable number of EAL students are able to improve their English skills during their studies, there are also a large number who do not. In one three-year study, approximately 32% of international students for whom English is a second/additional language remained at the same level of proficiency or worse (O'Loughlin & Arkoudis, 2009). Birrell's study (2006, p. 53) found that at least a third of graduated overseas students who obtained permanent residence visas "scored below the level normally required for employment as professionals in Australia". This problem of inadequate post-graduation English is echoed in a recent review of Australian universities, where it was noted that "while most international students succeed very well in their studies, many employers report that graduates' English proficiency is not suitable for immediate employment in professional jobs" (Universities Australia, 2013, p. 27). Scrutiny from external reviews and pressure from internal sources make it attractive for universities to allocate resources and restructure degrees to support the high numbers of EAL students needing to bridge the English gap (Arkoudis, Baik, & Richardson, 2012, p. 10).

The next section will survey some of the current language support activities in Australian universities to provide a benchmark against which the school-based approach at Flinders University can be compared.

2.2. Overview of academic language and learning support in Australia

There are three key pieces of research on ALL support in Australia which help to situate the school-based approach described in this paper within the broader Australian context. The first is from the Association for Academic Language and Learning (AALL), which surveyed 75 ALL centres in 33 Australian universities (85% of universities) (Barthel, 2013). The second is an in-depth benchmarking paper conducted by Melbourne University's Language and Learning Skills Unit (LLSU) on 8 Australian universities and 3 overseas universities (Ransom & Greig, 2007). Finally, the third is a scoping study of Australian Health Science faculties' ALL activities (Fenton-Smith & Frohman, 2013), referred to as HSALL in this paper. These three sources examine the structure and activities of ALL programmes, and reveal that Australian universities have some points of similarity in the way they deal with the issue of ALL development. In relation to ALL programmes across Australian higher education, Arkoudis et al. (2012, pp. 44-45) report a predominance of weak adjunct models of collaboration. The most common approach is to offer a centralised point of service which provides generalised support for all faculties and schools (Barthel, 2013). The generic centralised service caters to all students in all areas and at all stages of study, despite their diverse needs. There may, however, be some collaborative faculty and school-based work undertaken with centralised organisational models. Arkoudis et al. (2012, p. 41) report very little evidence of English language proficiency improving as a result of individual consultations provided by a generic centralised service.

The centralised model of ALL service delivery has begun to be supplemented or replaced by faculty-level support. Recently, the AALL reported that two universities abandoned the centralised approach altogether, and decentralised faculty-based units are on the increase (Barthel, 2013). Currently, while the AALL figures still show a predominance of centralised ALL units, nearly half of Australian universities also have faculties that employ ALL educators directly (Barthel, 2013). A number of studies expound the effectiveness of a faculty-based approach (Baik & Greig, 2009; Barratt, Hanlon, & Rankin, 2011; Bastalich, 2011; Dunworth & Briguglio, 2011; Durkin & Main, 2002; Evans, Tindale, Cable, & Hamil Mead, 2009; Frohman, 2012; Kennelly & Tucker, 2012; Thies, 2012), as this can result in grade improvement, higher student motivation, and better class attendance for EAL students.

A summary of the ALL support available in Australian universities is provided in Table 1. As can be seen, there may be generic help, such as workshops, pamphlets, consultations, a help desk, and/or online support such as documents, quizzes, video files, audio files, question forums, email, etc. Load-bearing topics and fee-based private tuition may also be offered. Table 1 provides only an overview of the commonalities among the types of ALL strategies, but does not include other factors such as the amount of time devoted to each activity (for example, a face-to-face consultation might only comprise ten minutes, once a semester for each student). Also, the table does not indicate the effectiveness of each deliverable.

Table 1. Academic and language learning activities across Australian Universities (adapted from the AALL tables, with the LLSU and HSALL data added).

AALL	LLSU	HSALL	Activity
95%	100%	84%	**Student consultations** (face-to-face, on-line, drop-in, phone)
95%	90%	72%	**Learning & teaching resources**, not subject integrated (on-line, print, audio-visual)
93%	100%	72%	**Workshops** (discipline specific, generic)
86%	82%	60%	**Subject/course integration** (curriculum development, learning resources, guest lectures, co-teaching)
84%	90%	48%	**Research/scholarly activities related to ALL practice** (learning issues - plagiarism, grants/awards, teaching evaluations, publications, learning needs analysis)
80%	100%	44%	**Transition** (academic preparation, orientation, alternative entry)
64%	82%	n/a	**Committee** representation and policy development (university and/or faculty level)
59%	34%	32%	**Staff development and support** (consultations, workshops, tutor training)
57%	81%	28%	**Research student support** (general and discipline specific)
52%	91%	28%	**Courses** (credit and non-credit)

Specifically addressing the health sciences, the HSALL study found that ALL instruction is still mostly served by an external or centralised unit, but "approximately one-quarter of health sciences faculties at Australian universities directly employ their own ALL staff" (Fenton-Smith & Frohman, 2013, p. A72). Furthermore, the HSALL study also noted that the most common activities in Health Sciences were those which were least embedded (for example, workshops, supplementary classes, writing support, resource development) (Fenton-Smith & Frohman 2013, p. A69). Thus, despite the positive move towards faculty-based support, if the integration is minimal, the model of support may not be either optimal or effective.

3. Emergence of the school-based English for Specific Purposes academic

A number of push factors led the School of Nursing & Midwifery to allocate specialised language and communication assistance to its EAL nursing students. Between 2009 and 2013, there was an increase of 36% in the number of international undergraduate students (now totalling over 500 students). Moreover, the school holds an increasingly larger proportion of the university's overall undergraduate international student population, up from 26% to 38% over the last five years. Initially, the school received generic centralised ALL support of the kind found in most Australian universities. Yet, despite this service being available, a significant number of international nursing students continued to struggle academically. Perhaps this was because the generic ALL assistance they received was not specifically focused on nursing or EAL.

The School of Nursing & Midwifery is not alone in striving to improve the support (and outcomes) provided to EAL students. Other schools of nursing within Australian universities also recognise the importance of providing effective and targeted ALL assistance to these students. For example, Murray (2012) reports on a pilot program which provided extra-curricular tuition to nursing and midwifery students. Over one semester, this program sought to improve general English language proficiency, particularly as related to undertaking the IELTS test, and nursing English. In another study, Hillege et al. (2014) report on an embedded approach within a core first-year nursing topic to enhance the academic literacy skills of students identified as requiring additional support. The School of Nursing & Midwifery sought a more long term enduring solution with multiple entry points rather than short-term programs such as those described by Murray (2012) and Hillege et al. (2014). Indeed, as Glew (2013) argues, the development of English and academic language skills across all years of nursing study and the provision of additional relevant activities to EAL students is important. Another push factor came from clinical venues where international students' linguistic and communicative skills were a core problem. Fenton-Smith and Frohman (2013, p. A64) reason that the clinical component differentiates nursing from other university topics because of the high stakes placed upon communicative competence. Furthermore, the academic nursing staff were feeling increased pressure when dealing with EAL student issues, partly because of the extra time required, and difficulty dissecting students' language problems into manageable components (this is understandable, since they are not experts in second language acquisition). The National Code of Practice states that registered providers must support students "to achieve their learning goals and to achieve satisfactory progress towards meeting the learning outcomes of the course", and also makes special reference to the need for "sufficient student support personnel", ensuring that providers are "suitably qualified or experienced in relation to the functions they perform for students" (DEEWR, 2007, pp. 15, 24: Standards 6 & 14). From this, it becomes clear that academic nurse educators should be supported to deal with second language development issues, since they are often not suitably qualified to deal with such linguistic problems alone.

Given the ineffective alternatives available for ALL support, the school initially paid for additional assistance from an independent English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students (ELICOS) provider to design and deliver adjunct support for the students. This strategy lasted for three years and was abandoned by the school because of poor attendance, a lack of visible improvement, and insufficient value for money. It may be the case that ELICOS providers lack the expertise to deal with advanced language learners in a specific tertiary context, since some ELICOS teachers may hold qualifications as low as a four-week CELTA certificate. Arkoudis and Starfield (2007, p. 25) pick up on the issue of qualifications and argue that ALL practitioners "need to be skilled professionals with postgraduate qualification[s] and a sophisticated skill set". In a subsequent article, Arkoudis et al. (2012, p. 59) ask for "second language acquisition research as the basis for informing teaching and learning practices".

The school's next strategy was to seek a suitably qualified ESP academic to concentrate solely on the EAL students' needs. The key aim of the position was to design and deliver a language development programme mainly for undergraduate EAL students. An international-only student focus is less common in Health Science faculties (only 24% of surveyed faculties have this) (Fenton-Smith & Frohman 2013, p. A67). If there is to be a successful integration of English

language programmes into a discipline, Arkoudis et al. (2012, pp. 73-78) state that there are five conditions that would be needed:

- a thorough needs analysis process,
- support of department leaders and disciplinary academics,
- highly qualified and flexible English language specialists who can understand the faculty context (including time, space, and timetabling),
- continuous collaboration with discipline content specialists,
- sufficient resources (including time, academic support, and funding).

The ESP academic position was designed to fulfil all these criteria. First, a needs analysis was conducted over a full year's teaching cycle with feedback gained from both students and staff (including student assessments), combined with a review of the literature on nursing language issues (published in Müller, 2011) and an exploration of the different communicative genres and contexts of nursing. Secondly, the ESP academic answers to the Head of School, a person with the authority and endorsement necessary to ensure the successful integration of services (Arkoudis et al., 2012, pp. 73-74; Dunworth, Drury, Kralik, Moore, & Mulligan 2013; Frohman, 2012, p. A55). Thirdly, the ESP academic was required to have a PhD in Education, Applied Linguistics, or another relevant discipline, and also have a qualification in Teaching English as a Second or Other Language (TESOL), experience in teaching ESL at a tertiary level, experience in curriculum design, and a demonstrated research capacity. This person was given a clear induction into the workings of the school and its organisational and curriculum structures. Fourthly, the ESP academic's office was located among other school academics. Importantly, the person would be classified as an 'academic' rather than 'general staff'. The 'general staff' status has negative implications for research output, workload, and the perception of academic legitimacy (Arkoudis et al., 2012, p. 46), in addition to a reduced attractiveness for high-achieving practitioners to conduct research. Indeed, Fenton-Smith and Frohman (2013, p. A69) argue that non-academic status has contributed to a lack of knowledge and dissemination of best practice in ALL. This also addresses the fifth point, since the academic load allows the time to conduct research and to access the funding allocated to research staff.

4. Activities and deliverables of the English for Specific Purposes Academic

In regards to the teaching activities offered by the ESP academic, a number of basic similarities will emerge with that found elsewhere in Australia: workshops, one-to-one remediation, and online support. However, what differentiates the school-based ESP academic's activities is the greater customisation to the needs of a specific student population, more than what can be achieved by an academic supporting an entire faculty or university population. Thus, students in the School of Nursing & Midwifery can expect all workshops to be relevant to their needs, information compliant with school-specific requirements and policies, and their time is not wasted on extraneous content. Furthermore, this school-wide approach promotes transfer of knowledge in and between nursing and midwifery subjects.

The activities of the ESP academic will be outlined below under the categories of face-to-face teaching, online support, and curriculum activities. Research undertaken by the ESP academic is also discussed. Each initiative has been through a number of developmental cycles over a three-year period, and will continue to be developed further according to evaluation and demand.

4.1. Face-to-face teaching and collaboration

The ESP academic provides teaching that is discipline-focused and that targets specific groups of students or particular genres and tasks. Face-to-face teaching activities often occur with collaboration with school staff. Thus, the Jones, Bonanno and Sculler (2001) continuum model for understanding the nature of collaborations provides an appropriate framework that can be used to conceptualise the teaching activities undertaken by the ESP academic described here. Mapped against the criteria in the continuum, the teaching undertaken by the ESP academic occurs at three of the four levels – in an adjunct role with a strong context specific focus, in an

integrated mode, and in an embedded way. Adjunct and integrated teaching activities are discussed in more detail below. The embedded activities are explored in greater depth later in the section on curriculum-based activities.

Firstly, the ESP academic undertakes teaching with a strong nursing focus in a programme that is an adjunct to students' usual course of study. A free, face-to-face, non-credit teaching programme was developed by the ESP academic for delivery over the first seven weeks of two semesters (to avoid clinical placement clashes). These are listed in Table 2 which elaborates on activities and the time dedicated to each. Adjunct teaching activities include workshops on writing and speaking skills, English language testing and medical terminology. The workshop content is intended to supplement EAL students' study and to support students hoping to remain in Australia after graduation to meet English language prerequisites for nursing registration. A description of the evidence-base and design of each non-credit topic is the subject of an upcoming paper, since there is not enough space to discuss it in this paper. Nonetheless, it can be said that the classes have evidence-based practice as their basis and a continuous feedback cycle is in place for each topic.

Table 2. The face-to-face teaching activities of the ESP academic

Writing and proofreading (1 hour per week)

Students proofread a nursing-themed text and create sentences out of nursing notes. They learn how to make texts reader-friendly and how to peer-edit.

Colloquial language (1 hour per week)

Students learn to recognise and practise using common idioms, phrasal verbs, and slang that may be encountered in a clinical setting.

Speaking skills (10 minutes per week)

Students practise phonological skills such as pronunciation of poorly assimilated L2 phonemes, correct word stress, and correct mouth movement.

Medical terminology (1 hour per week)

This co-taught class allows students to hear and practise saying common medical terminology for a body system each week, and is aligned with the pathophysiology/pharmacology topics. This class also concentrates on pronunciation and strategies for dealing with long words.

Nursing handovers (1 hour per week)

This is a co-taught class with both the ESP academic and a clinical facilitator delivering handovers to students, explaining charting and documentation, and highlighting the medical abbreviations used. Students must practise taking notes during a handover, practise using abbreviations, and deliver their own handovers.

IELTS (2 hours per week)

Students work through one section of a past IELTS test each week, developing test-taking strategies, and identifying areas of improvement. Links between academic study and the test are identified.

OET (1 hour per week)

Students work through one section of a past OET test each week, developing test-taking strategies and identifying areas of improvement. Links between clinical communicative competence and the test are identified.

At-risk assessments (1 hour per at-risk student)

The one-on-one assessment reviews language-learning history, current communicative environments, spoken/written English communicative skills. The student is encouraged to self-identify any perceived problem areas. The student is given feedback on their current strengths, and solutions to identified problem areas.

Orientation sessions (10 hours per year)

Sessions, offered pre-enrolment, are conducted as both a school-wide orientation and for small-scale topic-based orientations.

Secondly, the ESP academic offers a limited number of integrated activities where some co-teaching within a timetabled class or clinical activity occurs. These are outlined in Table 3. For example, the ESP academic receives requests from topic coordinators and tutors to provide workshops linked to assessment activities and to conduct class visits. These activities are not

mandated by the school, but rather evolve from formal and informal discussions between the ESP academic and school staff.

Table 3. The integrated face-to-face teaching activities of the ESP academic

Assessment-linked workshops (between 1–6 hours each, once a year per topic)

This is a co-taught workshop which was developed in response to demand. The ESP academic works with the topic coordinator to provide support material for an assessment piece and the workshop usually involves the topic coordinator conducting a question and answer session on the day.

In-class visit (between 1–2 hours per workshop)

Upon request, the ESP academic attends a class where the tutor has asked for help to develop some aspect of classroom practice or student engagement.

4.2. Online resources and development programme

An online presence entitled "Professional Language Development" was established within the university's Learning Management System (Moodle) to provide resources to support learning. An online presence was a key concern for this position because it enables just-in-time delivery of support materials and this can be important for learning (for example, students seek end-of-shift handover practice just before they start clinical placement). Original online materials were created only if no suitable alternatives were available elsewhere. An overview of the online resources and activities available is provided in Table 4. In total, there are about 4,500 online files, activities, resources, and links offered. There are space restrictions on how much information about the evidence and pedagogical base can be provided here; however, a starting point for some of the resources is Müller (2011, 2012, 2013) and Müller & Price (2012).

Table 4. The online resources and activities of the school-based ESP programme

Acculturation

Australian English, nursing, and study videos, audio podcasts about studying away from home.

Self-testing opportunities

A number of self-tests of medical, academic, and colloquial language.

Materials linked to classroom teaching

All audio and written materials presented in class are placed online for viewing or downloading.

Vocabulary development

Vocabulary developed through videogames, multimedia flashcards, hyperlinked lists with audio and pictures, vocabulary-building websites, PowerPoints, lists, and information sheets.

Reading development

Guides to better reading skills and strategies.

Writing development

Proofreading and writing exercises, guides, lists, and how-to resources, including information and examples of genre, referencing, nursing documentation, and assignment templates.

Listening development

Audio hyperlinked lists and flashcards to listen to vocabulary, its use in context, and end-of-shift handovers. PowerPoints and information podcasts are also provided.

Table 4 continued

Speaking and pronunciation development

Pronunciation practice resources such as charts, mp3s, PowerPoints, guides on interference problems (by language), and information about improving communication strategies and skills.

English proficiency tests

IELTS and OET information, materials, and practice sites.

Question forum

School-wide message board for posting questions and viewing answers.

Other

Employment and volunteering links, checklists, learning centre links, timetables, etc.

4.3. Curriculum work

In the curriculum, there are a number of ways in which the ESP academic collaborates with disciplinary academics "to plan the teaching, learning and assessment tasks" (Arkoudis et al., 2012, p. 44). The first is through committees, since the ESP academic is a member of three university teaching committees, in addition to attending school meetings. As such, the ESP academic is able to advise on best practice and to contribute practical ways to embed English language proficiency into the changing curriculum. The ESP academic also worked on the university-wide working group for first-year literacy and makes occasional contributions to other faculty committees.

The school recently transitioned to an entirely new curriculum, launched in 2013, in which the ESP academic was able to contribute to its planning, design, and implementation through membership on topic writing teams and contributions to the design and content of class activities. In the new curriculum, topic writing teams have asked the ESP academic about the language being used in assessment tasks, usually to do with comprehensibility or whether the language of the assessment activity (for example, rubric, assignment, examination) is an obstacle to the success of the EAL student. For example, a nursing scenario may unnecessarily use unusual words, Australian slang, or ambiguous culturally-nuanced words/sentences and this is rewritten where an unambiguous equivalent is possible. While, as previously discussed, there is a limit to the linguistic expertise of nursing staff, they can implement specialised teaching plans when given adequate support materials and training.

The ESP academic also engages with staff in topic meetings and clinical placement venues to answer questions and provide advice. This may involve questions about how to give better feedback, how to encourage students to talk more, how to improve an assessment task, etc. Indeed, the ESP academic has worked in a number of ways to improve student assessment, engaging in many of the activities listed by Arkoudis et al. (2012, p. 91) detailing how assessment practices can support English language proficiency in the curriculum. For example, clarifying English language proficiency expectations, highlighting English language proficiency as an assessable criterion, contributing to the sequencing and type of assessments in the curriculum, and emphasising peer activities and student self-assessment.

Finally, the ESP academic has been involved in a number of material-development activities designed to assist both teachers and students, such as modifying marking templates, designing referencing activities and templates based on the unique school style, and creating a custom-built nursing study skills textbook. While a number of publications have alluded to ALL practitioners' difficulties when dealing with disciplinary academics (Dudley-Evans, 2001, p. 236; Fenton-Smith & Frohman, 2013, p. 69; Jones, et al., 2001), this has not often been the case in the school. In fact, there has been a welcoming of the ESP academic's teaching and learning activities and a desire for collaboration.

4.4. Research

The ESP academic undertakes independent and collaborative research activities within the scope of the normal and expected activities of a researcher. The ESP academic conducts research, writes papers for peer-reviewed publication, presents papers at conferences, presents research papers in-house, partners with research teams, seeks grants, conducts studies, participates in research events, and reviews textbooks and publications. Essentially, these activities

comprise the full research activities expected of an academic. For example, one research project instigated by the ESP academic tested the design and efficacy of best-practice language learning games developed in-house for the nursing context. Another study investigated the implementation of a support program targeting the advanced second language acquisition writing needs of postgraduate students for academic discourse. There have been a number of peer-reviewed publications arising as a result of this position, such as Müller (2011, 2012, 2013, 2015a, 2015b), Müller and Habel (2012), Müller and Price (2012), and Müller and Mathews (2013). Finally, the ESP academic supervises two doctoral research students.

5. Evaluating the English for Specific Purposes programme

This section of the paper seeks to evaluate the school-based language development programme. Berry, Collins, Copeman, Harper, Li, and Prentice (2012, p. A17), in their 360-degree evaluation of their student services, make the observation that "points of accountability for any ALL centre are likely to be multiple, complex, and unique. Evaluation will be approached differently by each ALL centre." This section asks about the effectiveness of the programme, comparing each method of evaluation (and outcomes) to that found in the literature.

A common measure of quality assurance for a voluntarily-attended support service is student attendance numbers (Ransom & Greig, 2007, p. 9; Dunworth & Briguglio, 2010, p. A18; Durkin & Main, 2002, p. 25; Frohman, 2012, p. A52). Initially, the ESP programme struggled to attract a significant number of students – a problem observed elsewhere (Arkoudis et al., 2012, p. 42; Fenton-Smith & Frohman, 2013, p. A73; Frohman, 2012, pp. A50-A52). Between 2010 and 2013, student attendance doubled, with approximately 250 students voluntarily spending an average of approximately 8 hours in the ESP workshops in 2013. The increase in attendance may be attributable to greater awareness of these workshops among students and staff as promotional activities and word of mouth referrals increased. Also, increased attendance coincided with the renaming of the workshops from "English classes" to "professional language development". The total international cohort is approximately 550 students, so the programme seems to be reaching a wide number of students and maintaining their interest. Also, unlike the assertion by Arkoudis et al. (2012, p. 42) that "only the most motivated attend", the ESP programme now enjoys a broad spectrum of students. The "Professional Language Development" Moodle site is also successful, with over 65,000 downloads and views of its 344 main page resources in the past year (this site is open to the entire school, but its content is often irrelevant to English-proficient students). Notably, the open online message board, "Ask Amanda", attracts over 12,000 reads a year.

Grade improvement is another measure of efficacy used in the literature, and there is evidence that attendance at adjunct and embedded workshops is linked to better outcomes and grades (Barratt et al., 2011, p. 688; Dunworth & Briguglio, 2010, p. A17; Durkin & Main, 2002, p. 25; Frohman, 2012, p. A52; Kennelly & Tucker, 2012, p. A112; Murray, 2012, p. 60; Peelo & Luxon, 2007, p. 74). However, this school cannot reliably correlate attendance at language development workshops and grades because of the recent complete curriculum overhaul and the increase in English entry requirements which make chronological comparisons unreliable. The only usable evidence relates to fail rates among first-year students in the old curriculum, in the year immediately after the ESP programme was introduced, where the local student fail rate remained unchanged but the international student fail rate dropped by 25%. While this is indicative of improvement, the data must be carefully interpreted.

A commonly used evaluation of a programme is student ratings and comments (Bastalich, 2011, pp. 455-456; Baik & Greig, 2009, pp. 408-411; Berry et al., 2012, pp. A23, A27-A29; Dunworth & Bruguglio, 2010, pp. A18-A19; Durkin & Main, 2002, pp. 29-30; Evans et al., 2009, p. 603; Frohman, 2012, p. A52; Peelo & Luxon, 2007, pp. 72-74; Ransom & Greig, 2007, p. 9; Thies, 2012, pp. A21-A25). The ESP academic regularly seeks anonymous student feedback from surveys and ratings, with the most recent rating being 6.6 out of 7, from 200 responses. Other studies have used focus groups, interviews, and unsolicited emails to evaluate efficacy (Barratt et al., 2011, p. 691; Durkin & Main, 2002, p. 29; Evans et al., 2009, p. 598; Frohman, 2012, p. A51; Kennelly & Tucker, 2012, p. A105; Peelo & Luxon, 2007, pp. 72-74; Ransom &

Greig, 2007, p. 9; Yates & Wahid, 2013, p. 4). In this regard, there have been a number of students and lecturers who have written emails of thanks or have expressed their gratitude in person to the ESP academic. In addition, students refer each other to the service, which perhaps is the greatest measure of efficacy. However, it is acknowledged that self data collection, unsolicited qualitative feedback, and personal observations can give a biased picture.

Faculty and staff responses to an ALL service are also found in the literature (Evans et al., 2009, pp. 598, 604-607; Frohman, 2013, p. A54; Peelo & Luxon, 2007, p. 73), but it is a lesser-used method of evaluation because most of the attention is usually on the students. The LLSU (Ransom & Greig, 2007, p. 9) indicates that some formal feedback from faculty is sought by just over half the Australian universities in their study. The ESP academic obtains feedback through a number of means: direct and third-party emails, at meetings, within committees, and verbally – and all these are fostered by the close daily contact of the ESP academic with the nursing staff. Invitation for curriculum development is an indicator of esteem and has been reported in the literature to validate a support service (Frohman, 2012, pp. A54-A55; Ransom & Grieg, 2007, pp. 17-18). This already occurs with the ESP academic, as seen in the curriculum section of this paper, and indicates a level of satisfaction from school staff.

6. Challenges faced by the English for Specific Purposes Academic

The ESP academic's role and activities offers ongoing specialised support for EAL students within the School of Nursing & Midwifery. Yet, despite considerable progress, a number of challenges remain. The most significant of these relate to the overlapping issues of time, awareness and legitimacy.

6.1. Time

One of the difficulties for the ESP academic is the scheduling of the adjunct language development workshops which are delivered in a classroom setting to students. This voluntary programme is offered alongside a packed curriculum that has the normal load of studying plus work placement (in some cases, two whole days a week for a good proportion of the semester). In addition, many students are also working part-time. Thus, as self-reported by students, finding the time to participate in an adjunct program can be an obstacle. Furthermore, it is almost impossible to ensure that the ESP academic (one person) can offer classes at times convenient to everyone. There are inevitable clashes with lectures and tutorials, and this is an ongoing obstacle to the programme and a criticism made by students.

6.2. Awareness

Increasing the awareness about the assistance available from the ESP academic and the need for such services is another challenge. Among those EAL students who are failing, it is common to find that they did not attend the ESP workshops or use the other resources provided by the ESP academic simply because they did not think they had a language problem. The programme depends on students recognising that they have a language difficulty and then acting upon it. While the ESP academic attempts to mitigate this lack of awareness through induction talks to new students, there are still some EAL students who could be getting help but are not. These students' issues often come to a head in third year when there is usually too little time for the programme to work (language difficulties cannot be remedied overnight). As a result, this group of failing students often must have their studies extended by a year as they repeat one or two topics. As currently presented, the ESP programme cannot readily fix late identified problems.

Ongoing awareness among the School of Nursing & Midwifery staff is another issue. There are still some staff members who claim to lack knowledge about the role of the ESP academic despite promotional activities and engaging with them one-on-one. Moreover, some staff express the opinion that the money would be better spent on hiring another nursing academic to teach the nursing curriculum, or a nurse (rather than an English teacher) to offer professional language/communication development. Not everyone likes or approves of what the ESP academic does and this can inhibit effectiveness. Thus, while reasonably successful in developing and

maintaining collaborative approaches, the ESP academic is still seeking to enhance some existing linkages and forge new ones.

Finally, it is a constant challenge for the ESP academic to stay abreast of changes in both the nursing curriculum (from changes in timetabling, content, and assessment) and English language standards (including changes within the English tests for professional registration). This is in addition to the need to constantly learn more about nursing as a professional area and keep up to date with changes that fall within the scope of "communication" and the various nursing spoken and written genres, for example, changes to the format of reporting protocols, such as no longer using certain symbols and instead requiring fully spelt-out words, or needing to report information using a new spoken genre structure, etc. It is therefore an ongoing challenge to remain relevant and accurate.

6.3. Legitimacy

The ESP programme is not a load-bearing course, and as a result, it has diminished legitimacy and power which can inhibit the efficacy of the ESP academic's position. For example, the face-to-face programme does not carry much importance at a university level when it comes to booking classrooms. Every year, a great deal of time is spent finding a suitable room on the campus for face-to-face teaching. The effectiveness of teaching is compromised when students are squeezed into barely suitable spaces. However, the school has no control over this issue, as room bookings are centralised. Furthermore, at an organisational level, the lack of legitimacy and power affects the efficacy of the ESP academic's ability to remediate students' language problems. Students who clearly have a language problem can chose whether or not to access school-based ESP resources or follow recommendations. Nothing is enforceable, since no penalty can be attached to a lack of attendance or lack of engagement.

That said, the challenges of time, awareness, and legitimacy faced by the ESP academic are not insurmountable and will continue to be addressed as the work in this area matures. Time, awareness, and legitimacy are concerns not only for the school-based, but other models of ALL support found in universities. Indeed, Fenton-Smith and Frohman (2013, pp. A73-A73) include development of effective working relationships, time, and lack of recognition in the most commonly mentioned challenges faced by ALL practitioners working in the health sciences. However, the other commonly reported issues in their study, such as dealing with students, developing resources and covering too many locations, were not of concern to this school-based ESP academic.

Similar challenges to those identified in this paper appear beyond the health science discipline. For example, among barriers to attendance in an across discipline program for first-year EAL students in the Faculty of Business and Government, Kennelly and Tucker (2012, pp. A112-A113) identify the non-compulsory nature of programs, unwillingness of some EAL students to self-identify and accept support, and the impact of paid employment. Furthermore, sufficient time, educational integrity, consultation, and unity are included in the recommended good practices for the development of post-entry English proficiency (Dunworth et al, 2013, p. 1). As observed by Thies (2012, pp. A25-26), in an examination of curriculum development involving the embedding of academic literacies, support at all levels of the university from the "bottom up" and "top down" is required to successfully enact change. This suggests that ongoing relationship building by the ESP academic with not only the school but also across the university is required to further increase awareness and legitimacy.

7. Conclusion

This paper contributes to the body of literature examining different models of ALL support for EAL students attending university. Many argue that ALL support is best achieved through an integrated or embedded approach targeting a specific disciplinary context, usually at the faculty level. The initiative described in this paper goes further than the faculty level by shifting the concentration of support and development to the smallest academic unit of operation: the school. The resourcing of a school-based approach to EAL is beneficial to the university and

students because English language and course content are well connected. From an organisational perspective, the university is well-positioned to respond to calls for increased English proficiency among EAL graduates. From this base, it is a simpler task to ensure that the school-based service meets all the English development standards and requirements of the various governing and professional bodies. Furthermore, future international students may be attracted by the readily available context-specific support and the frequent integration and embedding of ALL activities that are specific to their subjects. The experience from this case study is that many students are self-motivated to participate not only in adjunct ALL activities, but also integrated and embedded ALL activities. This approach to EAL student development and support could be considered by other suitably-placed educational institutions in the future because it represents a significant opportunity for universities, and their staff and students.

References

Arkoudis, S., & Starfield, S. (2007). *In-course English language development and support*. Canberra: Australian Education International. Retrieved December 20, 2012 from https://aei.gov.au/research/Publications/Documents/NS_Incourse_LanguageDS.pdf.

Arkoudis, S., Baik, C., & Richardson, S. (2012). *English language standards in Higher Education*. Camberwell, VIC: Acer Press.

Baik, C., & Grieg, J. (2009). Improving the academic outcomes of undergraduate ESL students: The case for discipline-based academic skills programs. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *28*(4), 401-416. doi: 10.1080/07294360903067005

Barratt, C., Hanlon, D., & Rankin, M. (2011). Assessing the success of a discipline-based communication skills development and enhancement program in a graduate accounting course. *Higher Education Research & Development, 30*(6), 681-695. doi: 10.1080/07294360.2010.527929

Barthel, A (2013). *Table 2: Academic Language & Learning (ALL) Activities*. Association for Academic Language and Learning. Retrieved December 16, 2013 from http://www.aall.org.au/sites/default/files/table2ALLservicesTypesJul2013_0.pdf.

Bastalich, W. (2011). Beyond the local/general divide: English for academic purposes and process approaches to cross disciplinary, doctoral writing support. *Higher Education Research & Development, 30*(4), 449-462. doi: 10.1080/07294360.2010.518954

Berry, L., Collins, G., Copeman, P., Harper, R., Li, L., & Prentice, S. (2012). Individual consultations: Towards a 360-degree evaluation process. *Journal of Academic Language & Learning, 6*(3), A16-A135. Retrieved December 12, 2013 from http://journal.aall.org.au/index.php/jall/article/view/213.

Birrell, B. (2006). Implication of low English standards among overseas students at Australian universities. *People and Place, 14*(4), 53-64. Retrieved December 18, 2013 from http://arrow.monash.edu.au/hdl/1959.1/481827.

Crawford, T., & Candlin, S. (2013). A literature review of the language needs of nursing students who have English as a second/other language and the effectiveness of English language support programmes. *Nurse Education in Practice, 13*, 181-185. doi:10.1016/j.nepr.2012.09.008

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (2007). *National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007*. Retrieved December 18, 2013 from https://aei.gov.au/regulatory-information/education-services-for-overseas-students-esos-legislative-framework/national-code/pages/default.aspx.

Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education. (2011). *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2011*. Canberra, Australia: Federal Register of Legislative Instruments F2013C00169. Retrieved August 28, 2012 from http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2013C00169.

Dudley-Evans, T. (2001). Team-teaching in EAP: Changes and adaptations in the Birmingham approach. In J. Flowerdew & M. Peacock (Eds.), *Research Perspectives on English for Academic Purposes* (pp. 225-238). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Dunworth, K., & Bruguglio, C. (2010). Collaborating across boundaries: Developing a cross-departmental approach to English language development in an undergraduate business unit. *Journal of Academic Language & Learning, 4*(1), A13-A23. Retrieved December 18, 2013 from http://www.journal.aall.org.au/index.php/jall/article/viewArticle/117.

Dunworth, K., Drury, H., Kralik, C., Moore, T., & Mulligan, D. (2013). Good practice in developing an institutional strategy for post-entry student English. *Degrees of Proficiency: Building a strategic approach to university students' English language assessment and development.* Sydney: Office of Learning and Teaching. Retrieved December 9, 2014 from http://degreesofproficiency.aall.org.au/sites/default/files/custom-dop-files/Good%20practice%20for%20institutional%20strategy.pdf.

Durkin, K., & Main, A. (2002). Discipline-based study skills support for first-year undergraduate students. *Active Learning in Higher Education, 3*, 24-39. doi: 10.1177/1469787402003001003.

Evans, E., Tindale, J., Cable, D., & Hamil Mead, S. (2009). Collaborative teaching in a linguistically and culturally diverse higher education setting: A case study of a postgraduate accounting program. *Higher Education Research & Development, 28*(6), 597-613. doi: 10.1080/07294360903226403

Fenton-Smith, B. & Frohman, R. (2013). A scoping study of academic language and learning in the health sciences at Australian universities. *Journal of Academic Language & Learning, 7*(1), A61-A79. Retrieved December 18, 2013 from http://journal.aall.org.au/index.php/jall/article/view/253.

Frohman, R. (2012). Collaborative efforts work! Reflections on a two-year relationship between Faculty of Health and International Student Services – Language and Learning Unit. *Journal of Academic Language & Learning, 6*(3), A47-A58. Retrieved June 18, 2013 from http://journal.aall.org.au/index.php/jall/article/view/185

Gillet, A.J. (2011). Background to EAP: *What is EAP?* Using English for Academic Purposes: A Guide for Students in Higher Education. Retrieved March 5 2015 from http://www.uefap.com/bgnd/whatfram.htm.

Glew, P. J. (2013). Embedding international benchmarks of proficiency in English in undergraduate nursing programmes: Challenges and strategies in equipping culturally and linguistically diverse students with English as an additional language for nursing in Australia. *Collegian*, 20, pp. 101-108.

Hansen, E., & Beaver, S. (2012). Faculty support for ESL nursing students: Action plan for success. *Nursing Education Perspectives, 33*(4), pp. 246-250. doi: 10.5480/1536-5026-33.4.246

Harris, A. (2013). Identifying students requiring English language support: What role can a PELA play? *Journal of Academic Language & Learning, 7*(2), A62-A78. Retrieved December 10, 2013 from http://journal.aall.org.au/index.php/jall/article/view/276.

Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act. (2010). *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (South Australia) Act 2010.* Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency, South Australia. Retrieved December 16, 2013 from http://www.ahpra.gov.au/Legislation-and-Publications/Legislation.aspx.

Hillege, S.P, Catterall, J., Beale, B.L., & Stewart, L. (2014). Discipline matters: Embedding academic literacies into an undergraduate nursing program. *Nurse Education in Practice*, *14*, pp. 686-691.

Jones, J., Bonanno, H., & Scouller, K. (2001). Staff and student roles in central and faculty-based learning support: Changing partnerships. In B. James, A. Percy, J. Skillen & N. Trivett (Eds), Changing Identities: Proceedings of the Australian Language and Academic

Skills Conference. University of Wollongong. Retrieved October 16, 2013 from http://learning.uow.edu.au/LAS2001/selected/jones_1.pdf.

Kennelly, R.M., & Tucker, T. (2012). Why do "at risk" students choose to attend or avoid specific support programs: A case study of student experience at the University of Canberra. *Journal of Academic Language & Learning, 6*(1), A103-A116. Retrieved December 18, 2013 from http://journal.aall.org.au/index.php/jall/article/view/132.

Kilstoff, K., & Baker, J. (2006). International postgraduate nursing students: implications for studying and working within a different culture. *Contemporary Nurse: A Journal for the Australian Nursing Profession, 22*(1), 7-16. Retrieved December 20, 2013 from http://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=641521235252723;res=IELHEA.

Müller, A. (2011). Addressing the English language needs of international nursing students. *Journal of Academic Language & Learning*, *5*(2), A14-A22. Retrieved November 11, 2011 from http://journal.aall.org.au/index.php/jall/article/view/145.

Müller, A. (2012). Research-based design of a medical vocabulary videogame. *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning*, *7*(2), pp. 122-134. doi: 10.5172/ijpl.2012.7.2.122

Müller, A. (2013). Improving the identification of medication names by increasing phonological awareness via a language-teaching computer game (Medicina). In S. Arnab, I. Dunwell & K. Debattista (Eds.), *Serious games for healthcare: Applications and implications* (pp. 283-295). Hershey, PA: ICI Global.

Müller, A. (2015a). Language proficiency and nursing registration. *International Journal of Nursing Studies,* in press, published online January 22, 2015. doi: 10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2015.01.007.

Müller, A. (2015b). The differences in error rate and type between IELTS writing bands and their impact on academic workload. *Higher Education Research and Development (online)*, *34*(2), pp. 1-13. doi: 10.1080/07294360.2015.1024627.

Müller, A., & Habel, C. (2012). Gaming to learn: language in a clinical context. In C. Nygaard, N. Courtney & E. Leigh (Eds.), Simulations, games and role play in university education (pp. 123-138). Oxfordshire, UK: Libri Publishing.

Müller, A., & Mathews, G. (2013). 'Medicina: Methods, models, and strategies.' In Y. Baek & N. Whitton (Eds.). *Cases on Digital Game-Based Learning: Methods, Models and Strategies* (pp. 147-167). Hershey USA: IGI Global.

Müller, A., & Price, J. (2012). A pedagogy-driven approach to the design of a medical abbreviations videogame: Brevissima. *Japan Association for Language Teaching Computer Assisted Language Learning Journal*, 8(3), pp. 147-163. Retrieved December 18, 2013 from http://journal.jaltcall.org/articles/8_3_Müller.pdf.

Murray, N. (2012). A report on a pilot English language intervention model for undergraduate trainee nurses. *Journal of Academic Language & Learning, 6*(1), A48-A63. Retrieved December 18, 2013 from http://journal.aall.org.au/index.php/jall/article/view/135.

O'Loughlin, K., & Arkoudis, S. (2009). Investigating IELTS score gains in higher education. *IELTS Research Reports Volume 10*, 95-180. Retrieved December 16, 2013 from http://www.ielts.org/PDF/Vol10_Report3.pdf

Olson, M.A. (2012). English-as-a-second language (ESL) nursing student success: A critical review of the literature. *Journal of Cultural Diversity, 19*(1), 26–31. Retrieved December 20, 2013 from http://search.proquest.com/docview/1013485086?accountid=10910.

Peelo, M., & Luxon, T. (2007). Designing embedded courses to support international students' cultural and academic adjustment in the UK. *Journal of Further and Higher Education, 31*(1), 65-76. doi: 10.1080/03098770601167930

Ransom, L. (2009). Implementing the post-entry English language assessment policy at the University of Melbourne: Rationale, processes, and outcomes. *Journal of Academic Language & Learning, 3*(2), A13-A25. Retrieved December 18, 2013 from http://www.journal.aall.org.au/index.php/jall/article/viewFile/71/64.

Scheele, T.H., Pruit, R., Johnson, A., & Xu, Y. (2011). What do we know about educating Asian ESL nursing students? A Literature Review. *Nursing Education Perspectives, 32*(4), 244-249.

Starr, K. (2009). Nursing education challenges: Students with English as an additional language. *Journal of Nursing Education*, *48*(9), 478-487. doi: 10.3928/01484834-20090610-01

Thies, L.C. (2012). Increasing student participation and success: Collaborating to embed academic literacies into the curriculum. *Journal of Academic Language & Learning, 6*(1), A15-A31. Retrieved from http://journal.aall.org.au/index.php/jall/article/view/127.

Universities Australia. (2013). *Policy statement: An agenda for Australian higher education 2013-2016*. Universities Australia. Retrieved December 18, 2013 from http://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/resources/788/1537.

Yates, L., & Wahid, R. (2013). Challenges to Brand Australia: International students and the problem with speaking. *Higher Education Research & Development, 32*(6), pp. 1037-1050. doi: 10.1080/07294360.2013.806447