

## CONTENTS

SAAL Talk	2
SAAL Talk: A report	3
New Books	6
Calls for Papers	7
Coming up in the Region: Events of Interest	8
Research in Applied Linguistics: A Bibliography for Academic Writing Research	10

*SAAL Quarterly* is under the editorship of Dr. T. Ruanni F. Tupas and Beatriz P. Lorente. Please address your correspondence and contributions to: Dr. T. Ruanni F. Tupas (elcttr@nus.edu.sg) Centre for English Language Communication, National University of Singapore: 10 Kent Ridge Crescent Singapore 119260.

## SAAL TALK

Co-sponsor: Centre for English Language Communication (CELC), NUS

### Tracing ideas from a pre-writing discussion session to individual drafts

by

**KC Lee**

Centre for English Language Communication  
National University of Singapore

Date & Time: Wed, 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2006, 6-7:30pm

Venue: Block Admin, Seminar Room #04-02

### Abstract

In writing programmes that adopt the process genre approach (Badger & White, 2000), pre-writing activities such as brainstorming sessions are important prior to drafting. Writing teachers believe that pre-writing brainstorming sessions help student writers formulate their thoughts and consolidate their ideas. However, not much has been done to investigate whether this transfer of knowledge takes place; and if it does, what patterns can be observed. This paper presents a case study which aimed to trace and compare the organization and development of ideas of two groups of students in an undergraduate English for Academic Purposes (EAP) module, from a brainstorming session to the students' individual drafts. One group did their discussion in the conventional face-to-face (F2F) mode while another discussed via the chat.

Discussion transcripts were analysed using a genre-based content analysis framework which was developed based on content and interaction analysis models (Ahern, Peck & Laycock, 1992; Henri, 1992; Newmann, Webb & Cochrane, 1995; Howell-Richardson & Mellar, 1996; Gunawardena, Lowe & Anderson, 1997). Findings were then compared with the students' individual drafts to ascertain whether idea threads in the collaborative discussion environment were transferred to the drafts.

There were a number of interesting findings in this case study. In terms of task fulfilment and management of discussion, the F2F group was more

focused during their discussion than the chat group and there was more in-depth discussion of ideas in the F2F group. As to transfer of content from the brainstorming session to the writing drafts, it was found that there was a pattern in which the transfer of ideas occurred.

Although the case study involved only two groups of students, the findings may have practical implications for writing teachers specifically in the design of and requirements set for a writing task and a discussion session.

#### **About the speaker:**

KC Lee is a lecturer with the Centre for English Language Communication (CELC), NUS. Her current research interests lie in second language writing and the use of technology in the classroom.

#### **About the chairperson:**

Wu Siew Mei is Division Head for Curriculum and Testing of CELC. Her research interests are academic writing (source-based writing – writing using background information), and constructive processes in reading and writing.

Light refreshments served from 5.45pm.

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### **KC Lee's SAAL Talk: A Report**

KC Lee's SAAL Talk entitled, "Tracing ideas from a pre-writing discussion session to individual drafts", was based on a case study she initiated to find out how ideas transfer from brainstorming environments into individual drafts. Much has been done to investigate the impact of group brainstorming activities on student writing and language learning, but KC's work is different in the sense that it actually tries to map out the 'movement' of ideas from brainstorming to individual writing.

To put it in more practical terms, a major question in KC's research was to ask whether or not ideas from brainstorming environments actually find expression in students' individual works and, if they do, what sort of ideas are these? To find out answers to these questions (and many others), KC investigated two brainstorming contexts: the face-to-face (F2F) and synchronous chat environments participated in by her own students from the Faculty of Engineering taking the course, *English for Academic Purposes*.

#### 4 SAAL Quarterly

The study made use of a genre-based content analysis model which drew on a wide range of frameworks in content analysis and interaction analysis, as well as in protocol analysis and rhetorical structure theory. Such genre-based content analysis model of the study framed and characterized the data according to three major categories: (1) task conception (e.g., structure, requirement, planning), (2) management of discussion (elicitation, focus, suggestion/instruction), and (3) knowledge construction (initiation, elaboration, example), with a fourth but quite nebulous category – (social) – which essentially refers to instances of 'off task' and 'interrupted start' in the data.

These categories and their corresponding sub-categories were used to describe the data.

Among its major findings, the study found that as far as time on task was concerned, F2F brainstorming was far more focused than that of chat. In terms of depth of discussion, ideas in F2F were found to be more developed and in-depth than those in the chat. The dominant codes in F2F were elaboration, repetition, clarification & structure, and agreement, while student energies in chat were oriented mainly towards off task, requirement, and initiation codes.

In terms of idea threads discussed and used, all students in F2F were found to have written about topics discussed during the brainstorming session, while most of them followed closely the ideas initiated and elaborated in the group discussion. Among students in the chat, 77% of them wrote about ideas discussed during the brainstorming session, although only 53% of these who wrote about the same themes made use of key ideas during the discussion and a smaller 35% examples and elaboration of each solution. There was a much higher likelihood for general ideas than specific ones to appear in the student drafts.

And lastly, in terms of ownership of ideas, students in F2F were more likely to make use of ideas initiated by others than students in chat. Interestingly (though not surprisingly), participants who contributed the least during the brainstorming sessions made use of others' ideas than those who were active in the discussions.

While F2F was found to be more 'successful' than chat in providing a context where ideas discussed found their way in the individual works of the students, in general KC Lee argued that based on her data pre-writing

brainstorming activity does, indeed, have a (positive) influence on development of ideas for writing. She explained that this could be partly because the discussion sessions also served as testing grounds for ideas to be accepted and rejected, thus providing students a chance to deliberate on their own and others' ideas and gain from this exercise some confidence to use those ideas which they found 'safe'. Lastly, KC also concluded that while most participants tended to work towards consensus (or convergence of ideas), nevertheless the written drafts (especially those of students in chat) showed a tendency towards individuality.

Although KC with the usual academic caveat that her study could not make any definitive conclusions yet, nevertheless questions after the presentation were spirited and varied. There were concerns about overlapping functions of message units which would have implications for the characterization of chat and F2F interactions (KC explained that overlapping is always an issue no matter what model of analysis you are using).

There were also concerns about students' familiarity with the technology of chatting which would also have an impact on the kind of content and rhetorical structure they produced (KC admitted that familiarity with the technology would certainly be a factor but, to address this problem, students were provided adequate information and practice before they were made to 'attend' the actual session itself).

Lastly, there was a short discussion on the implication(s) of the study for the use of technology in language learning classrooms, given the upsurge of such phenomenon everywhere. Could F2F learning environments still be the most effective means of developing learner autonomy, writing skills and the like?

Twenty people attended the talk which started and ended on time. Among those present were Dr. Wong Lian Aik, Director of CELC and Assoc. Prof. Chng Huang Hoon, SAAL President. Everyone seemed to agree that KC's work was undeniably rigorous, but to me what was significant about it was the fact that it pointed to the fact that, indeed, when students discuss and brainstorm among themselves, they *do* get something out of it.

*Prepared by* T. Ruanni F. Tupas  
CELC, NUS

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## NEW BOOKS

Cruz-Ferreira, M. and S.A. Abraham (2006). **The language of language. Core concepts in linguistic analysis**, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Singapore: Prentice Hall/Pearson Education Asia. (ISBN 9810676182 Pp.288)

**Synopsis:** If you've ever wondered why we need concepts like noun and verb or word and phrase when discussing language, this book is for you. Deliberately selective in its approach and assuming no prior knowledge of linguistics. The Language of Language explores the nature of language and linguists' agreed-upon ways of talking about the object of their inquiry. Our focus is on modes of thinking rather than content knowledge. Our goal is to encourage informed thinking about language matters and why language matters.

**About the authors:** Madalena Cruz-Ferreira hails from Portugal, and received an M.A and PhD from the University of Manchester, UK. She has several publications in the areas of multilingualism, child language, phonology and intonation, and she currently teaches linguistics at the National University of Singapore. Her research interests include child multilingualism, multilingual intonation and the language of science.

Born in Malaysia, Sunita Anne Abraham received her BA (Hons.) and MA from the National University of Singapore and her PhD from the University of Birmingham, UK. Her research interests lie primarily in the areas of argumentation, rhetoric and discourse analysis. A senior lecturer at the National University of Singapore, she is the happy recipient of several teaching awards, including Outstanding University Educator.

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Rubdy, Rani and Saraceni, Mario (Eds.) (2006). **English in the World -- Global Rules, Global Roles**. UK & USA: Continuum. (HB ~ ISBN 08264 8905 2 PB ~ ISBN 08264 89060 Pp 224)

**Synopsis:** English today is a truly global language which plays an important role in international communication, trade, diplomacy, sport, science, technology and culture. One of the consequences of the global predominance of English is that non-native speakers of English now outnumber native speakers. The enormous diversity in the way English is spoken around the world makes it difficult to determine a common set of norms. The need to

identify with the local culture often comes into conflict with the need to be understood internationally and creates a complex picture of English diversity.

This collection of essays by internationally renowned academics brings together different theoretical perspectives that reflect this debate on norms. The first section examines different conceptions of English as an international language, looking at world Englishes, English as a lingua franca, and 'standard' English. The second section looks at the pedagogical implications of English as an international language, and addresses such questions as: how can we design a curriculum for teaching English, what methods are most effective for teaching English, and what are the key considerations for the ESL classroom to remain globally relevant?

*English in the World* will be of interest to students and researchers of world Englishes, applied linguistics and English as a second/foreign language.

**About the authors:** Rani Rubdy is at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. Mario Saraceni is a Lecturer in the School of Languages and Area Studies, at the University of Portsmouth.

## CALLS FOR PAPERS

### Language Variation and Change in the United States

9-12 November 2006

The American Dialect Society, Midwest Region with the Midwest Modern Language Association, the Palmer House Hilton, Chicago, Illinois

The conference welcomes papers dealing with varieties of English and other languages spoken in the United States. Presentations may be based in traditional dialectology or in other areas of language variation and change, including sociolinguistics, historical linguistics, anthropological linguistics, folk linguistics, language and gender/sexuality, language attitudes, linguistics in the schools, critical discourse analysis, or narratology.

April 15, 2006 is the deadline for 300-word abstracts. Email submissions only.

Send abstracts to:

Kathryn Remlinger  
remlingk@gvsu.edu  
American Dialect Society, Midwest Secretary  
Grand Valley State University, Allendale, Michigan  
1-616-331-3122

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### COMING UP IN THE REGION: EVENTS OF INTEREST

24-27 April 2006. **41<sup>st</sup> RELC International Seminar: Teacher Education in Language Teaching.** Venue: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre, Singapore. Invited speakers include Allan Luke, Peter Martin, Amy Tsui, Jack Richards, Tom Farrell, Cynthia White, Choong Kam Foong, Danilo Dayag, Datin Hjh Rosnah Hj Ramly, and Jeremy Harmer.

The seminar aims to (1) examine different approaches to training, (2) look at how far training can improve an individual's teaching, and (3) consider whether there is one particular training approach that can suit all teachers. Topical areas include: the history of language teacher training, training within the region and beyond, pre-service versus in-service training, similarities and differences in training first language, second language and foreign language teachers, language skills versus teaching skills; what is the relative importance of each?, nature versus nurture: are teachers born or trained?, the effect of training on teaching, observation: an aid or a threat, the practicalities of the practicum, teacher selection procedures, and the professionalism of the teaching profession. Website: [http://www.relc.org.sg/seminar.htm#TOPIC\\_](http://www.relc.org.sg/seminar.htm#TOPIC_)

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27-28 April 2006. **LangScope: Exploring ways of teaching language and literature. Co-hosted by the English Language & Literature Academic Group of the National Institute of Education (NIE) and the Singapore Teachers' Union (STU).** Venue: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre, Singapore. Guest of honour: Mr Gan Kim Yong, Minister of State (Ministry

of Education & Ministry of Manpower). Keynote speakers: Emeritus Professor Frances Christie, Associate Professor Tara Goldstein, Professor Allan Luke, and Professor Graeme Turner. Registration deadline has been extended 20 March 2006.

This conference is intended for all teachers of English and Literature from primary to junior college levels. It features papers and workshops on scaffolding, children's literature, text types, critical and creative thinking in the EL classroom, drama and media in the English classroom, and many more. Website: <http://alvin.myplace.nie.edu.sg/langscape/index.html>.

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8-9 June 2006. **Invitational Symposium 2006: *Language issues in English-medium universities across Asia***. Co-hosted by the Faculties of Arts and Education in collaboration with the English Centre, HKU. Venue: University of Hong Kong. Plenary speakers: Amy Tsui, David Nunan, James Tollefson, and Joseph Lo Bianco.

The symposium gathers reports from selected universities on the use of English as a teaching medium. It will address issues arising from the impact of English as a teaching medium throughout East, South-East and South Asian universities. Plenary and featured speakers are invited from these universities, as well as universities in English-speaking countries with a high level of institutional partnership and involvement with Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Focus countries: Hong Kong, India, Malaysia, Singapore, The Philippines, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Japan, China, Thailand and Vietnam. Contributions will be compiled into a book length study of language in university education, to be published by Hong Kong University Press in their book series *Asian Englishes Today*. Website: <http://www.hku.hk/clear/plenary.html>.

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## RESEARCH IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS

### A bibliography for academic writing research

Wu Siew Mei (Editor)

Centre for English Language Communication, NUS

The following section presents a bibliography of research and practice in academic writing in English language that spans over the last two decades or so. The list mainly focuses on *tertiary level undergraduate and post-graduate writing except in papers that compare these writings to professionally written texts*. Given that the umbrella term academic writing includes a comprehensive range of related issues, this bibliography is organized around major areas of development in the field as outlined by Jones (2004).

Jones discusses academic writing research and pedagogy from an international perspective and broadly classifies four areas in the field contributing to current views and practices: (1) English for Academic Purposes, (2) genre theories, (3) studies on academic literacies and (4) work on writing across the curriculum (WAC). The unifying factor in these areas is the convergence on the need for more critical awareness of the role of language in constructing texts, writer identities, and of the view that writing is a socially and culturally embedded practice. These identified areas are used as a guide for the classification of references although one has to keep in mind that in actuality, the overlap of distinct categories is not uncommon.

It is beyond the scope of this bibliography to provide equally comprehensive references to work done within the four areas. As such, the listing mainly consists of theoretical deliberations and pedagogical investigations into the first three areas as the WAC phase seems further removed from the interest of current local practices than the others. Though not directly pertinent, the generic approach to the study of English language at primary and secondary levels locally may reflect the direction of English language teaching at institutions that provide the student base for our tertiary level institutions. As such, work pertaining to genre theories is given comprehensive coverage.

**English for Academic Purposes**

- Allison, D. (1996). Pragmatist discourse and English for academic purposes. *English for Specific Purposes* 15 (2), 85-103.
- Allison, D., Berry, V. and Lewkowicz, J. (1995). Processes and their products: A comparison of task sequences and outcomes in EAP writing classes. *Hong Kong Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching*, 18, 13-31.
- Allison, D. and Wu, S. M. (2001). Academic writing: Whose expectations? *RELC Journal*, 32 (1), 52-72.
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- Belcher, D. and Braine, G. (Eds.) (1995). *Academic writing in a second language: essays on research and pedagogy*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- Benesch, S. (2001). *Critical English for academic purposes: Theory, politics and practice*. Mahwah, N. J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Canagarajah, A. S. (2002). *Critical academic writing and multilingual students*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Chandrasegaran, A. (1994). Integrating content-course tasks into the teaching of writing skills for academic purposes. In K. Chanock (ed.), *Integrating the teaching of academic discourse into courses in the disciplines*. (Proceedings of the conference held at La Trobe University, November), pp. 21-22. Language and Academic Skills Units of La Trobe University, Melbourne.
- Chandrasegaran, A. (1996). Awareness of rhetorical goals and academic writing competence. In S. Leong and A. Kirkpatrick (eds.), *Different Approaches: Theory and Practice in Higher Education. Research and Development in Higher Education*, Vol 19. Jamison Centre, ACT, Australia: HERDSA.
- Chandrasegaran, A. (2000). An analysis of obliqueness in student writing. *RELC Journal* 31, 23-44.
- Chandrasegaran, A. (2000). Cultures in contact in academic writing: Students' perceptions of plagiarism. *Asian Journal of English Language Teaching*, 10, 91-113.
- Chandrasegaran, A. (2002) Empowering NNSE postgraduate students for written academic discourse: An exploratory study of discussion moves. *English Australia Journal*, 19(2) 8-28.
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- Flowerdew, L. (2002). Corpus-based analyses in EAP. In J. Flowerdew (ed.), *Academic discourse*, pp. 95-115. London: Longman.
- Hale, G., Taylor, C., Bridgeman, B, Carson, J., Kroll, B., and Kantor, R. (1996). *A study of writing tasks assigned in academic degree programs*. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.
- Horowitz, D. (1986). What professors actually require: Academic tasks for the ESL classroom. *TESOL Quarterly*, 20, 445-462.
- Johns, AM. (2001). ESL students and WAC programs: varied populations and diverse needs. In S. McLeod, E. Miraglia, M. Soven and C Thaiss (eds), *WAC for the New Millennium: Strategies for Continuing Writing-Across-The-Curriculum Programs*, pp. 141-64. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Jordan, R. R. (1997). *English for academic purposes: A guide and resource book for teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Leki, I. and Carson, J. G. (1997). Completely different worlds: EAP and the writing experiences of ESL students in university courses. *TESOL Quarterly* 31(1), 39-69.
- Leki, I. (1998). *Academic writing: Exploring processes and strategies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Leki, I. (Ed.) (2001). *Academic writing programs*. Alexandria, Va: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages.
- Pender, J. (1997). *English for academic purposes: writing*. Toowoomba, Queensland: USP Press for the Centre for Language Learning and Teaching.
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- Tang, R. (2004). An approach to written academic voice: Exploring the interpersonal negotiations in student academic writing through APPRAISAL. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham.
- Tang, R. and John, S. (1999). The 'I' in identity: Exploring writer identity in student academic writing through the first person pronoun. *English for Specific Purposes*, 18, S23-S39.
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- Wu, S. M. (2004). Investigating evaluative language in undergraduate argumentative essays. Unpublished PhD thesis. National University of Singapore.
- Wu, S. M. and Lee, G. L. (2005). Reexamining the criteria for diagnosing undergraduates' English skills. In Paradigm Shifts in English Language Teaching and Learning. *Selected papers from the inaugural CELC international symposium*, pp. 117-128. Singapore: National University of Singapore.

### Genre Theory

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- Bazerman, C. (1988). *Shaping written knowledge: The genre and activity of the experimental article in science*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

- Berkenkotter, C. and Huckin, T. N. (1995). Conventions, conversations, and the writer: An apprenticeship tale of a doctoral student. In C. Berkenkotter, & T. N. Huckin (eds.), *Genre knowledge in disciplinary communication: Cognition, culture, power*, pp. 117-150. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
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- community view. In A. Duszak (ed.), *Cultures and styles of academic discourse*, pp. 11-39. New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
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