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Academic language development:

Future directions

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overview

1. a few numbers concerning *Academic Language & Learning (ALL)*
2. student diversity
3. *ALL* services
4. challenges at institutional & national levels
5. future options

1. a few numbers

- *2009: Good practice principles*

2022: post COVID

• ALL staff numbers -	2010: 460	2023: ~ 370 (-20%)
• ALL staff academic status -	2010: 52%	2023: 17% (-74%)
• student numbers -	2010: 1.12M	2022: 1.6M (+43%)
• o/s students -	2010: 280k (25%)	2022: 524k (33%) (+87%)
• ALL staff : student ratio	2010: 1 : 2,400 (range: 1:700 to 1:7,300)	2022: 1 : 4,300 (+79%) (range: 1:375 to 1:15,900) (at UQ 1:12,000)

- *location of ALL educators*

- ALL staff have 'moved' from largely centralised centres in 2010 (**79%**), (currently 23%) to student services 43%, selected faculties 19%, the library 12%, etc.

- *managers of ALL staff*

- in 2010, ~**87%** of ALL managers had a language/TESOL background;
- today ALL managers are more diverse, some with no/limited language education backgrounds.

2. student diversity

“... a mature age single mother living with her 3 school age boys in rural SA with no UG degree enrolled in a distance education PG course at CDU ... and she’s competing with her sons to access their 10 year old computer ...”

ALL educators also ‘service’:

- UG, PG, HDR, distance education, off-shore students ...,
- international students (IS): universities have ‘reasonable’(?) language entry requirements ($\geq$ IELTS 6.0), but most IS enter universities via pathway courses/institutions with low language entry requirements ($\leq$ IELTS 5.0),
- mature age students: some with limited/no previous university experience and/or who completed UG degree long time ago,
- indigenous students, and
- domestic ESB and LOTE students, many with lower ELP levels than international students.

overall challenges:

- most 1st year students are generally unprepared for university study
- the **number** of students increases, but also their **diversity** while the number of *ALL* educators decreases.

3. increasingly ‘diverse’ *ALL* services

- ‘standard’ *ALL* services:
 - *ALL* support workshops, e.g. ‘essay writing’,
 - one-to-one consultations,
 - ‘embedding’ *ALL* into curriculum,
 - orientation programs,
 - teaching credit units, etc.
- ‘additional’ services (👉 more work!):
 - teaching ESL type classes for low ELP students,
 - organising post-enrolment language assessments (PELA),
 - developing and providing online resources: chats, forums, proofreading, etc.,
 - providing support to students with mental health issues,
 - offering staff development to faculty staff ... and
 - ... ‘fixing’ *Studiosity*!

4. challenges



4a. challenges: at institutional level

- nearly every university in Australia has **restructured** its *ALL* services in the past 5 years, sometimes more than once:
 - loss of staff, forced redundancies, change of status and/or employment conditions, morale issues, increased casualisation, increased workloads, isolation of *ALL* staff,
 - funding cuts, introduction of commercial providers of *ALL*,
 - COVID related issues: off-shore international students, online teaching, and
 - limited recognition of the ‘pedagogic’ and ‘financial’ value of *ALL* work.

4b. challenges: at national level

The six 2010 *English Language Standards for Higher Education* were never included in the *Higher Education Standards Framework* (nor were the Good Practice Principles)

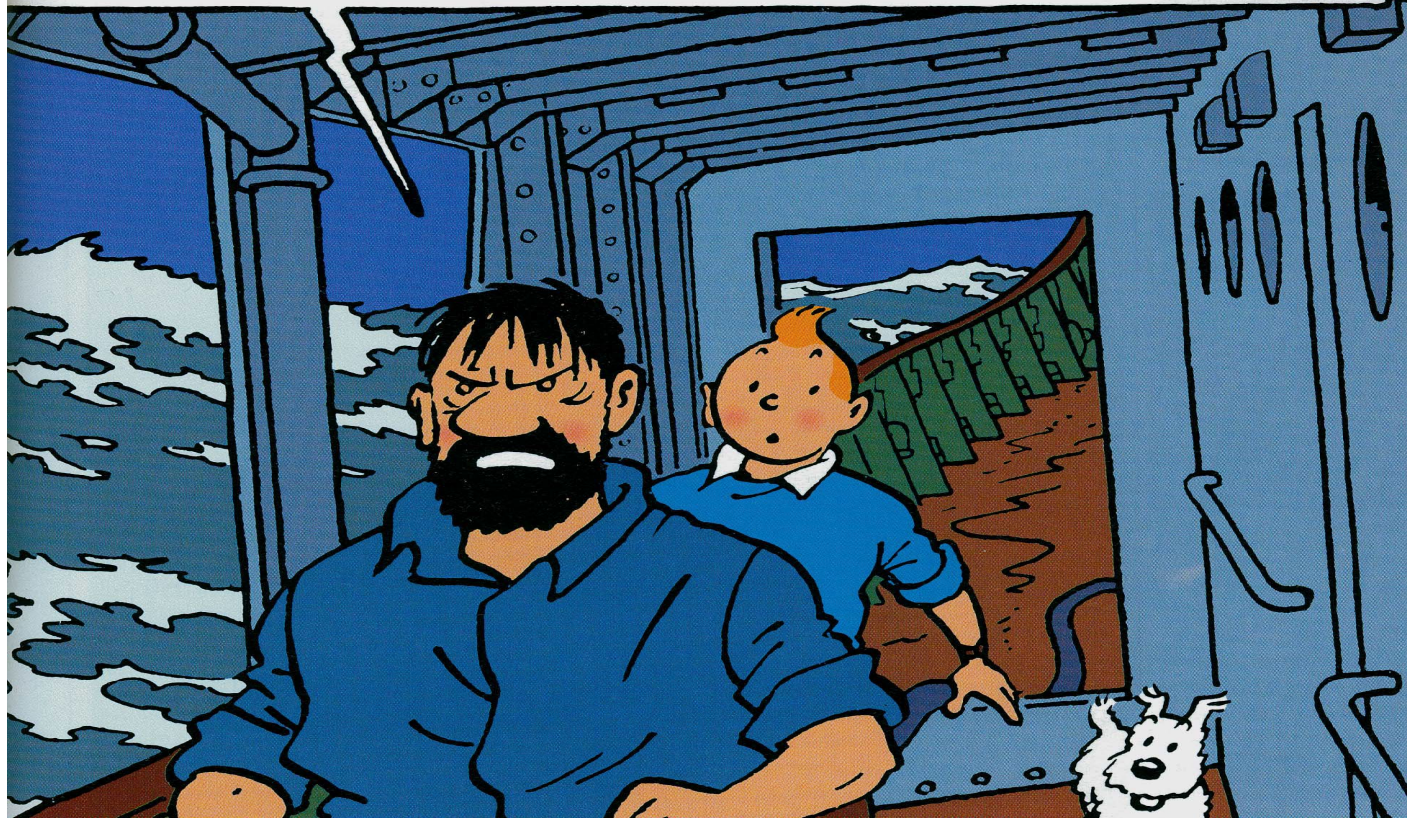
The Higher Education provider:

- 1. ensures that its students are sufficiently proficient in English to participate effectively in their higher education studies on entry;**
2. ensures that prospective and current students are informed about their responsibilities for further developing their English language proficiency during their higher education studies;
- 3. ensures that resourcing for English language development meets students' needs throughout their studies;**
- 4. actively develops students' English language proficiency during their studies;**
- 5. ensures that students are appropriately proficient in English when they graduate; and**
6. uses evidence from a variety of sources to monitor and improve its support for the development of students' English language proficiency

..... but the 2021 TEQSA compliance guide has included some of of these standards.

5. here's the future

... I'm going to try to restart the engines. You go up on the bridge and take the wheel.



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5a. here's 'the engine' ... not new, but works well!

“Best practice in the development of *ELP* has shifted from the provision of decontextualised tuition in generic skills, such as academic reading and essay writing, to *ELP* development integrated into the curriculum of the mainstream units students are studying for their degrees.

(...) the goal of embedding academic language is to make the learning of academic & professional language conventions & practices explicit to all students within their discipline to enable them to be successful in their academic studies and beyond.

This kind of teaching leads to high quality learning for students and a high degree of equity. If, on the other hand, academic language skills are assumed rather than explicitly taught, many students, particularly those from marginalised groups, are disadvantaged.” (Barthel, 2005)

5b. future strategies at institutional level

- develop an ELP policy - over 1/3 Australian universities have one
 - embedding academic language needs to be supported/endorsed by formal university/faculty policies, procedures & rules, and
 - champions are needed at the most senior level.
- review and develop curriculum to embed *ALL* - this is an increasing trend in Australia
 - academic language needs to be formally embedded in course structures, through compulsory award subjects, over the length of every degree, and
 - more champions are needed at faculty levels.
- implement compulsory PELA - over 2/3 universities use a PELA, but it is rarely compulsory
 - assessing all students' ELP as they start university courses informs the types of developmental and remedial *ALL* provisions needed.

5b. future strategies at institutional level (contd.)

- continue to offer supplementary workshops in faculties: ‘discipline flavoured’ workshops are better than generic ones outside faculties
 - there will always be students who need more language support than what is provided through embedding academic language in the mainstream curriculum
- initiate professional development activities for faculty staff ➡ ‘cultural’ change,
 - embedding academic language needs to be ‘owned’ by faculties and supported by on-going PD provided by *ALL* staff
- document this work – to satisfy the bean counters (retention!), share with others, and
- communicate internally, liaise externally

Questions

... thank you!

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17th biennial AALL conference

JCU, Townsville, Queensland

“connect, collaborate, create”

<https://www.jcu.edu.au/aall>

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