

Editorial

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Welcome to this special issue of the Journal of Academic Language and Learning which brings together a number of papers based on presentations offered as part of the thirteenth Biennial Conference of the Association for Academic Language and Learning held at Deakin University's Waterfront campus in Geelong in November, 2017. The conference theme of *21st Century Academic Language and Learning: Innovations in practice and partnerships* sought to encourage submissions around innovative practice demonstrating how ALL work is changing in response to changes in the higher education sector. These changes include not only the greater diversity in the student population that has now become the norm in the Australian context, but also the increasing demand for online academic support, round-the-clock service provision, and the greater focus on the need for data to inform both the planning and evaluation of ALL provision. In this context, the increasing diversity and complexity of ALL partnerships was seen as a potentially rich theme, reflecting the possibilities arising from working alongside librarians, educational designers and data management specialists, as well as teaching academics in new and innovative ways.

These interwoven themes were explored and extended in different ways by the keynote speakers and in the plenary sessions. Professor Ursula Wingate's opening presentation provided a practical illustration of how ALL specialists working in partnership with subject teaching academics can work towards 'curriculum integrated' academic literacy development. Her presentation challenged us to reconsider the terms we use to describe 'embedded' approaches, which do not place responsibility for academic writing development with the subject specialist. While acknowledging the challenges of such models, her explicit description of how ALL specialists could support the design of activities within the curriculum to create 'literacy windows' was a powerful way of demonstrating the potential for this model of collaboration.

Associate Professor Karen Orr Vered, as a subject-teaching specialist in screen and media at Flinders University, provided further evidence of the importance of a shared responsibility for academic writing development. Karen presented on the innovative practice around reading and writing she has integrated into her own teaching. Using a shared inquiry approach with in-class reading and writing activities, she demonstrated how her approach encourages a focus on discourse as well as content.

Picking up on the 21st Century theme, Lucy Schultz (Deakin University) and Professor Ian Solomonides (Victoria University) adopted an appropriately less conventional approach to their conference plenary, offering delegates a 'conversation' in which they explored the wide-ranging impacts of digitalisation. Noting both the opportunities and disruptions occurring in all sectors as a result of new technology, they acknowledged the continuing importance of such skills as critical literacy in a world where there are few controls on the publication and distribution of information.

Our final plenary presented by the outgoing president of AALL, Rowena Harper, was on another topical theme, that of the increasing concern with student academic integrity and the rise in so called 'contract cheating' – a less than welcome disruption supported by the emergence of online essay writing mills providing students with cheap and ready access to written assignments on demand. Reporting on a recent OLT project, her presentation showcased the plethora of online services now available to students, but highlighted that while students were aware of these services, relatively few currently used them. This presentation encouraged ALL specialists to consider how they could positively contribute to practices which discourage contract cheating such as in-class writing development and the provision of exemplars.

Alongside these keynote presentations, the conference streams were *Changing Identities in ALL*, *ALL for Diversity and Inclusivity*, *Digitalising ALL Practices*, *Partnerships in Action*, *Innovations*

in *Peer Learning, Research and Evaluation, Academic Integrity* and a *Maths* learning stream. We are delighted that papers from all streams are presented in this conference edition of JALL.

Malkin and Chanock's paper provides new insight to how we view ourselves as ALL specialists in this 21st century landscape. Offering not only a snapshot of the current field, the paper captures the perspectives of those within it on both what has been gained through increasing collaborations around curriculum and teaching and learning, but also what has been lost, through the reduction in direct work with students. Similarly, the paper reflects on the growth in the development of online resources, which is welcomed by many, but which has left others concerned for the implications of an overreliance on such resources for vulnerable student populations.

Digital approaches are picked up by Ashton-Hay, Yin and Ross who focus on the value of the online tool and the interactions that arise between the various stakeholders, whereas Garcia identifies challenges and opportunities. Others provide descriptions of emerging digital practices in ALL, such as Hall, Bell and Latham, who introduce us to a mental calculation app.

The need for numeracy support is addressed in several papers which examine how and where numeracy is taught and what constitutes numeracy. Irwin, in particular, examines what counts as numeracy support given the prior educational experiences and course requirements of students in enabling programs. The importance of identity is touched upon. Bardon sees the external literacy and numeracy test for pre-service teachers (LANTITE) as the driver for changing practices. Building cultural and linguistic confidence is the topic of the paper by Baker et al. with the focus being maths for students from refugee backgrounds.

A common theme running through all the papers is the continuing robust reflection by practitioners within our field on how they can continue to support students to achieve their full potential. In this space, Norman and Newham question how we work with disabled students.

Our role in developing student identity consistently featured and whilst Goldsmith, Willey and Boud tackle this from an engineering perspective, Nallaya et al. use blended and experiential approaches to develop a self-regulated curriculum for social work students. Marsh quite pragmatically presents academic integrity through referencing and, at a higher level, Johnson, Nicola and Hobson discuss the need to transition research students into new spaces of thinking and being.

Papers also emphasise the value of student peer mentoring in the higher education learning space. Several models are proposed by various authors, with Garcia-Melgar investigating online learning strategies to recruit student peer mentors.

Not a single paper ignored the value of partnerships. The challenge posed by Wingate in her keynote address of how we work in partnerships informs the thinking in papers by Veitch, Strehlow and Boyd, Dianati and Schubert, and Wilson et al. Although partnerships to us, the Editors, seem a logical way for spreading influence and gaining acceptance, perhaps they also suggest a lack of confidence in ourselves and our expertise? If a partnership collapses, whose funds are cut? Hoadley and Hunter argue for a whole of institution approach to ALL and Charlton presents a model which makes invisible players and roles more visible.

Research and evaluation of ALL strategies are apparent throughout; Maissan and Perry present their peer observation model which allows interstate ALL teams to review each other's teaching. Johnson argues using North American data that content is highly critical to engagement and learning.

We are delighted to present such a bumper edition. In these times of intensifying workloads and reduced focus on research in position descriptions, it is heartening to receive so many papers, and a pleasure to have the interaction with authors and reviewers to achieve such a positive outcome for so many.

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