

Practice and Theory
for Materials
Development
in L2 Learning

Practice and Theory for Materials Development in L2 Learning

Edited by

Hitomi Masuhara, Freda Mishan
and Brian Tomlinson

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PREFACE

HITOMI MASUHARA, BRIAN TOMLINSON
AND FREDA MISHAN

Gone are the days, it seems, when ‘materials writing’ – the predecessor of materials development in the 1970’s - was considered as an extension of methodology and at times undervalued as atheoretical and unworthy of serious attention. There seems to be growing awareness of the significant role that materials play in language learning and teaching and of the importance of research in materials development (see Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2017 for a comprehensive review of how the field started and is developing; Tomlinson, 2012 for an extensive review of the literature on materials development).

As Richards (2010, ix) puts it:

...whereas materials design may seem an eminently practical activity, sound instructional materials cannot be created in a theoretical vacuum. They draw on a wide variety of theoretical foundations, since they reflect particular assumptions about the nature of language, of second language learning, and of second language teaching. They should hence be informed by research and current knowledge drawn from relevant domains of applied linguistics, including corpus linguistics, discourse analysis, genre analysis, pragmatics and sociocultural theory.

From our experience of leading various textbook projects in more than 29 countries, stakeholders at institutional/national levels seem to be aware of the fact that improving materials may be the fastest and most cost-effective way of facilitating teacher development as well as improving language learning provision. These sponsors and decision-makers expect accountability and validity in materials development and strict evaluation of the projects by measuring if the new materials are in fact facilitating effective and successful language learning (Al-Busaidi & Tindle, 2010). Publishers would testify to the fact that coursebook production is a risky and costly business that requires careful research (Amrani, 2011; Singapore Wala, 2013). The kinds of materials available are changing as

delivery modes are diversifying e.g. blended learning, M-learning (Kern, 2013; Mishan, 2013; Tomlinson and Whittaker, 2013). Such changes add to the increasing calls for principles and procedures for sound materials development (McDonough, Shaw & Masuhara, 2013; Mishan & Timmis, 2015; Tomlinson, 2011; Tomlinson, 2013b). The number of hits for online encyclopaedia may provide further evidence of an increasing demand for materials development. The Encyclopaedia of Applied Linguistics by Wiley, for example, offers 1,100 entries written by an international team of scholars from over 40 countries, covering the highly diverse field of applied linguistics such as Language Learning and Teaching, Bilingual and Multilingual Education, Assessment and Testing, Corpus Linguistics, Conversation Analysis, Discourse, Cognitive Second Language Acquisition, Language Policy and Planning, Literacy, and Technology and Language. By far the highest hit was recorded in 2014 for materials development.

It is no wonder then that we are seeing more and more material development modules and courses, a dramatic growth in the number of PhD and EdD students researching materials development and a rapid expansion of the literature on materials development (Harwood, 2014; McDonough et al, 2013; McGrath, 2014; Mishan and Timmis, 2015; Tomlinson, 2013a; Tomlinson, 2013b; Tomlinson and Masuhara, 2010; Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2017 forthcoming).

This book claims a unique position in a sense that in the book practitioners evaluate theories, as the title of the book indicates. It presents 16 studies from 12 countries across the globe (Australia, Cyprus, Egypt, Hong Kong, Iran, Ireland, Italy, Lebanon, Oman, Russia, U.K., Viet Nam) involving materials development for diverse learners and contexts. These reports provide snapshots of the complex and dynamic nature of how materials are used and their effects on language learning.

This book is divided into three parts: Part 1 Meeting Different Learner Needs, Part 2 Methodology and Approaches and Part 3 Materials in Diverse Contexts. Each chapter surveys the relevant literature, describes a specific research project, reports the results of the project and discusses the implication of these results both for the development of materials for the local context and for the development of materials in general. After each section there are editorial comments highlighting the relevance of the research findings and there is a Conclusion which connects the findings of the different chapters and makes suggestions both for future research and for the principled development of materials for L2 learners.

The Editors believe that such research reports will contribute to the field of materials development as it faces the challenges of catering for the recent diversification of needs and contexts. Furthermore we are hoping that this book will provide ideas and stimulus for practitioners' own research within their specific contexts.

The book has global appeal because the contributors are from all areas of the world. And yet, the findings of the research reported in the book are of value to materials developers and researchers in specific countries and in all countries too, as there are underlying universal issues which the Editors highlight in their comments' sections.

Lastly we are pleased to be able to announce that this book is another fruition of the endeavours of MATSDA (The Materials Development Association), an international charitable organisation founded in 1993 by Brian Tomlinson for the development of quality materials for learners of second/foreign/additional languages. MATSDA aims to bring together teachers, researchers, materials writers and publishers so they can stimulate innovative and principled research and materials development through collaboration. MATSDA organises annual conference(s), publishes *Folio* - a journal dedicated to materials development, runs workshops, provides consultants and publishes books such as *Materials Development in Language Teaching* (1998; 2nd edn. 2011), *Developing Materials for Language Teaching* (2003; 2nd edn. 2013), *Research for Materials Development in Language Learning* (2010) and this book in 2017.

MATSDA welcomes contributions from anyone interested in materials development to our journal *Folio*, to our conferences and to our workshops. We have jointly organised successful conferences not only in the U.K. but also in many countries around the globe e.g. Argentina, Australia, Belgium, China, Columbia, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, U.S.A., Viet Nam and more and we are always looking out for future partners.

MATSDA's website is www.matsda.org. Anybody who is interested in joining MATSDA should contact the membership secretary matsda_membershipsec@nile-elt.com and anybody who would like more information about MATSDA should contact Brian Tomlinson brianjohn.tomlinson@gmail.com

Hope we'll be working together in the future.

Hitomi Masuhara, the founding and continuing MATSDA Secretary
 Brian Tomlinson, the Founder and current President of MATSDA
 Freda Mishan, present Editor of the MATSDA journal, *Folio*.

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SECTION 1

MEETING DIFFERENT LEARNER NEEDS

CHAPTER ONE

EAP LEARNERS' STRUCTURED REFLECTIONS ON SELF-DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES: THE DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF A TASK FOR EAL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

BEN FENTON-SMITH

Introduction

More than most areas of language teaching, materials development in EAP/ESP is beholden to context. This is sometimes a criticism, as Dudley-Evans (2001, p. x) notes: 'it has been suggested that EAP too easily adopts the role of just fitting students into the mainstream activity of their department and into subordinate roles in the academic world'. The art of good materials development in EAP/ESP lies in satisfying the demands of external constraints while maintaining the pedagogical and theoretical integrity of the materials. This chapter describes an attempt to achieve that balance within an EAP program at a major metropolitan Australian university with large numbers of EAL (English as an Additional Language) students. The project described here was a response to the formal expression by government of expectations for self-directed learning by EAL university students.

A major contextual issue that frames the project is the growth in international student (IS) numbers at Australian universities. Over one in five students are ISs (ABS, 2011), and nine of the top ten source countries are Asian, with the tenth being Saudi Arabia (AEI, 2011). More than a quarter of these students come from China. Some experts have questioned whether many of these students have sufficient academic language and learning competency to study in English at the tertiary level. The demographer Birrell (2006, p. 53) caused widespread concern when he

examined IS enrolments and asked 'how overseas students with poor English gained entry to Australian university courses in the first place' and how they 'manage[d] to complete their university courses satisfactorily'. The general public were alerted to these issues by negative national press coverage (e.g. Ewart, 2007; Healy and Trounson, 2010). However, these concerns have been weighed against commercial realities: international education activity generated AUS\$16.3 billion in export income for the Australian economy in 2010-11, making it the nation's largest services export industry (AEI, 2011).

The federal education authority made its stance clear in the (2009) report *Good Practice Principles for English Language Proficiency for International Students in Australian Universities*. This is a statement of expectations to Australian universities about sound pedagogical practice for enhancing ISS' language ability. Amongst other things, the report stipulates that the following principle be promoted within academic programs:

Students have responsibilities for further developing their English language proficiency during their study at university and are advised of these responsibilities prior to enrolment. (DEEWR, 2009, Document 1, p. 3)

The principle contains a call to action for two parties: (a) ISs, who are expected to take responsibility for their own learning, and (b) the universities themselves, who are expected to inform the students of this responsibility.

Most universities already provide many opportunities for students to develop their language proficiency. Typical services include one-to-one language consultations and academic skills workshops. However these services are often underutilized, as suggested in a report from the Australian Learning and Teaching Council: 'Despite the time and effort that has been invested in language and learning support for international students in Australian universities [...] it seems that, for a number of reasons, many students avoid or are unable to use such services' (Rocheouste, Oliver, Mulligan and Davies, 2010, p. 20). One likely reason for this is that students do not perceive a need for extracurricular assistance. Having met or exceeded the requirements for university entry, it would be natural to assume that one is ready and able to study at that university (and suitably proficient in English to do). The likely focus of a fresh-faced Taiwanese aviation student is aeronautical science, not report writing workshops. Of course, some students may simply be reticent to

seek help, or not know how to do so, or lack the time to do it. Often, the students taking advantage of learning services are the motivated and successful ones who least need it. The task that is profiled in this chapter was developed to address this issue of underutilization within the policy climate of the *Good Practice Principles*.

Pedagogical context

The setting is Griffith University, a network of five campuses across south-east Queensland, Australia. It has the fifth-highest number of ISs of all Australian universities, with 11,000, or 26.2% of the student body (ABS, 2011). Recognising this, the university implemented a program of English Language Enhancement Courses (ELECs), credit-bearing subjects aligned with each of the university's major academic groupings and mandatory for first-year EAL students (unless exempted by certain criteria, such as scores on IELTS or time spent studying in an English-speaking country):

- English Language and Communication for Business and Commerce
- English Language and Communication for Health
- English Language and Communication for Science, Environment, Engineering and Technology
- English Language and Communication for Arts and Social Sciences

The ELECs' objectives are to boost language proficiency and equip students with the strategies and skills for managing a university degree within the western academic tradition. Each course runs for one 13-week term, with a 2-hour lecture and a 2-hour tutorial per week.

The learner development task

To encourage students to take responsibility for their learning, the ELEC curriculum planners created an assessment item titled the 'University Service Reflection Task' (USRT). To complete it, students investigated the range of learning opportunities available at the university, then accessed at least one, and submitted a written reflection on the experience. The assignment was designed to fulfil several functions:

1. Ensure that EAL students received an orientation to support services at the beginning of their degree.

2. Ensure that EAL students accessed and reflected on at least one service offered outside of compulsory coursework.
3. Provide knowledge and experience that could facilitate EAL students' ongoing self-development.

Students received a three-part handout. The first section contained instructions for attending a learning support service:

- Attend one of the services below and write a reflection on your experience.
- Note that some services are offered during certain weeks in the semester, and that almost all of them require advanced bookings to attend. It is your responsibility to make arrangements to attend the service of choice as early as possible. Refer to the relevant website below for further information.
- The service must be conducted in English and must not have been specifically created for members of your nationality to meet.

The second section contained instructions for writing a reflection on the experience:

- The reflection is to be 250 words (+/- 10%), typed.
- Submit it with your portfolio in the final week of term. If this task is not submitted, 10% will be deducted from the final portfolio score.
- The reflection should include the following parts:
 - Introduction - This includes your academic situation, the service chosen, and your reason for choosing this particular service.
 - Body - This includes a description of the service (e.g. where, when, who, and what was involved) and a review of the service (e.g. what was useful for you, how you intend to apply the knowledge learned, and what areas were not satisfied by the service).
 - Conclusion - This includes your overall appraisal of the service and suggestions for future personal development in this area.

The third section contained a list of services and accompanying websites:

- Library Learning Services (academic, computing, and library research skills):
 - <http://www.griffith.edu.au/library/workshops-training>

- Student Linx (social networking):
 - <http://www.griffith.edu.au/studentlinx>
- English HELP (English language support):
 - <http://www.griffith.edu.au/englishhelp>
- Find Your Voice (intercultural communication workshops):
 - <http://www.griffith.edu.au/englishhelp>
- Careers and Employment (job search seminars and career counselling):
 - <https://intranet.secure.griffith.edu.au/community-welfare-recreation/careers-employment/assistance-with-job-search/job-search-seminars>
 - <https://intranet.secure.griffith.edu.au/community-welfare-recreation/find-career-direction/?a=78458>
- Griffith University Clubs (professional, political, recreational, social, religious, sporting etc.):
 - <http://www.griffith.edu.au/clubs/clubs-a-to-z>

Application of theory to task design

A theoretical tension underlying the task is the conflict between mandated and self-directed learner actions. It is a compulsory assignment in a compulsory course, but claims to promote self-directed learning. However, while it may seem contradictory to ‘teach’ students to be autonomous, Nunan (1997, p. 202-3) suggests that several assumptions can be made when designing materials to encourage learner autonomy:

- Few individuals come to the task of language learning as autonomous learners;
- Developing some degree of autonomy is essential if learners are to become effective language learners;
- The ability to direct one’s own learning can be developed through pedagogical intervention;
- There are degrees of autonomy [...]

The design of the USRT was based on a similar set of assumptions, i.e.:

- Most students do not enter university with all the necessary knowledge and skills to exploit the range of learning opportunities available to them;
- Students need to develop some degree of learner autonomy to succeed at university; and

- Pedagogical intervention can aid in developing self-directed learning.

Nunan's fourth point, that there are degrees of autonomy, was also crucial to the task design. The USRT exemplifies the second of Nunan's (1997, p. 195) five-stage hierarchy of autonomy, namely 'involvement', whereby '[I]earners are involved in selecting their own goals from a range of alternatives on offer' and 'make choices among a range of options'.

A second point about the task design is the fact that it offers students several services not directly concerned with language proficiency, such as Library Learning Services (academic skills, computer literacy), Student Linx (structured socializing for international and domestic students) and Careers and Employment (helping students organize their professional futures), all of which may turn out to be powerful facilitators of language acquisition and development. An underlying assumption is that EAL students need *holistic* support to perform well in second language tertiary environments, not just a focus on improving their L2 output. Hyland (2006, p. 17-8), for example, refers to the 'study skills approach to EAP' which holds that 'students need more than linguistic knowledge to be successful in their studies', a view emerging 'from a perceived over-emphasis on linguistic forms in early register-based materials'. The academic skills workshops offered by Library Learning Services were therefore included in the USRT to avoid a narrow conceptualization of language support. Another issue is socialization: the notion that students perform better academically, and advance faster linguistically, if integrated into the local community (Prebble *et al.*, 2004; Walsh, 2010; Gersham and Clayton, 2011). Research indicates that international students in Australia seek better integration into the campus and/or wider community (AEI, 2010a; Marginson *et al.*, 2010). The task therefore offered social engagement opportunities through Student Linx and university clubs. Finally, the issue of language proficiency cannot be divorced from that of employability: 69% of Australian employers are 'concerned about the standard of written and spoken English of Australian educated international graduates' (AEI, 2010b, p. 16). The Careers and Employment service was therefore also included in the task.

The USRT is also informed by research on the efficacy of reflection in learning. The link between deep reflection and experiences 'out of the norm' is a common theme in the literature, going back to Dewey (1910). Rogers (2001) conducted a concept analysis of reflection in higher education, and noted that most authors posit 'an event or situation beyond

the individual's typical experience' (2001, p. 42) as a necessary antecedent to reflection. In the case of the USRT, attending a university service represents this experience, while the written response formalizes and structures the reflective process.

The literature also points to several pitfalls for designers of reflective tasks. First, Macfarlane and Gourlay (2009, p. 457) warn that 'behavioural conformism' can result: i.e. students write whatever (they perceive) their markers want to hear. Because some students may be reluctant to express negative views about university services, the USRT explicitly directs them to state 'what areas were not satisfied by the service'. A second pitfall is that students can be unsure of what to do, since 'reflection' is such an open-ended, and at times unfocused, concept (Hatton and Smith, 1995; Stewart and Richardson, 2000). Clear directions provide a scaffold within which deep reflection can occur (Moon, 2006; Dymont and O'Connell, 2011). For this reason, the USRT instructions are prescriptive, providing students with an introduction/body/conclusion framework, and guidelines for completing each section (see above). A third pitfall is assessment. Many researchers point out that summative assessment is problematic in reflective writing, since it is so difficult (and possibly unethical) to make objective judgements about good and bad reflection (Sumsion and Fleet, 1996; Ixer, 1999; Stewart and Richardson, 2000; Rogers, 2001; Bell et al., 2011; Clarkeburn and Kettula, 2011; Smith, 2011). Therefore a numerical grade is not awarded for the reflective essay. Instead, a formative comment is provided by the tutor, and marks for the course are reduced only in the case of non-submission. This gives students the licence to reflect frankly on their service experience.

Method of evaluating the task

73 samples of students' writing were collected from a random sample of tutorial groups within the business and health strands of the ELECs (with ethical consent). The texts were analysed for recurrent themes using NVivo 9 software. In the reporting of results, these themes were quantified in two ways: by the number of texts they appeared in, and by the amount of text they covered in the corpus, referred to as 'text coverage'. (Where text coverage percentages are reported, percentages do not necessarily total 100 because it is possible for one piece of text to contain multiple themes.) The purpose of the analysis was twofold:

1. To evaluate the effectiveness of the task design through analysis of task output.
2. To gauge student views on the worth (or otherwise) of the task through analysis of their reflective comments.

Findings and discussion

The sample of student essays indicated the relative popularity of services (see Table 1.1). By some margin, the most attractive were English HELP (one-to-one language consultation) and Library Learning Services (academic skills, computer and information literacy). This suggests that the primary focus of the students was passing courses, since they accessed services to improve the use of English in assignments or to improve study skills. Few students attended university clubs or Student Linx, which focussed on socialisation. A likely reason was that these services required more active emotional investment from participants and were therefore intimidating to newcomers.

Table 1 Services that students wrote about.

Service	Number of texts
English HELP	33
Library Learning Services	28
Find Your Voice	5
Clubs	3
Library	2
Student Linx	1
Counselling service	1
Online writing advice	1
Course discussion time	1
Total	75

The results shed light on ambiguities in the task instructions. Two students wrote about multiple services (which explains why 75 services were written about in 73 texts) and some attended services (counselling, online writing advice, course discussion time) that were not on the prescribed list. These are not necessarily problems. Comparing multiple services could be better than reflecting on one. Attending non-sanctioned services could be seen as students exercising initiative and autonomy, which was the point of the exercise (although reflecting on counselling sessions raises ethical issues). Two students wrote about the library's book collection, probably

thinking this is what ‘Library Learning Services’ meant, which indicates clearer instructions are needed.

Turning to the issue of how students wrote about the services, the analysis revealed five main types of writing: describing the experience, evaluating the experience, stating learning gains, explaining reason(s) for choosing the service, and asserting personal identity. Table 1.2 provides data on the prevalence of each type in the corpus.

Table 1.2. How students wrote about the services.

Type of writing	Number of texts	Text coverage %
Description of the service experience	73	38.5
Evaluation of the service experience	73	36.9
Statements about learning gains	72	31.7
Explanation of reason(s) for choosing the service	73	17.6
Statements of personal identity	57	8.7

Note: ‘Texts’ refers to the number of reflective essays in which the types of writing appeared; ‘text coverage’ indicates how much of the total corpus was devoted to each type.)

The fact that description was the predominant form of writing does not mean that the task failed to engender reflection. Students were instructed to provide ‘a description of the service (e.g. where, when, who, and what was involved)’. Indeed previous research suggests that significant amounts of simple description are to be expected in reflective writing (Hatton and Smith 1995; Kember et al. 2008; Bell et al. 2011). Reflective tasks require the descriptive step, since this provides the ‘stuff’ on which to reflect. In the words of Boud *et al.* (1985, p. 27), when ‘we witness the events again they become available for us to reconsider and examine afresh’. For the USRT, students provided three main types of description. All but two texts contained description of service content, that is, a recounting of events in the service experience. For example:

First, the teacher introduced the main structures of report and essay to me that I can distinguish them. Then, she told me the overall structure problem of my essay because I used the headings for the essay. After that, she read my essay literally and helps me to line out the problems of my essay.

The second type, found in 88% of essays, was procedure description, in which students provided details about how to attend the service. For example:

I called English HELP and made a booking which was from 11am to 11:45am on 24th of September 2010. I was told by email that I needed to go to G02. I have arrived there on time and met a teacher named Royce.

The third type was purpose description, evident in one-third of texts. Students described why the service exists—its rationale. For example:

This service provides an opportunity for student to communicate with people from different countries.

Evaluation was the second most common form of writing (36.9% text coverage). Students used explicitly evaluative language to say something positive or negative (as indicated in Table 1.3) about the service.

Table 1.3 How the services were evaluated.

Type of evaluation	Number of texts	Number of comments	Text coverage %
Positive	73	247	28.8%
Negative	40	67	8.0%

Positive comments were large in number: 247 overall, and present in all texts at an average of 3.38 per essay. These included general praise (e.g. 'this service it's very convenient and useful for me'); commendations of staff (e.g. 'Kevin is a very nice teacher who used simple examples and language to help me to understand and inspired me to think'); and promotion of service benefits (e.g. 'It can improve the students' English and get better grades'). Negative comments were much fewer by comparison, and even those were often 'backhanded compliments' such as:

I think 45 minutes for each student per week is not enough for both speaking, listening, especially writing problems.

The service should consider online consultations to be more flexible and help more students.

These comments, while negative, suggest students would like to attend services more often and for longer. Although it is possible that students wrote what they believed their instructors wanted to hear (Macfarlane and

Gourlay, 2009), the task instructions gave them licence to criticize and the assignment received no numerical grade, so students knew that whatever they wrote, they did not lose any assessment points. On balance, these results suggest that the task succeeded in engaging the students.

Approximately one third (31.7%) of text coverage was constituted by statements of learning gains, in line with task instructions to write about ‘what was useful for you’ and ‘how you intend to apply the knowledge learned’. The types of gains could be classified into four categories: linguistic, scholastic, personal and professional. However, there were very few examples of the latter two, reflecting the fact that few students attended either the socially-oriented services (e.g. clubs) or the professionally-oriented service (careers guidance). The most commonly reported type of learning gain was linguistic: i.e. students felt that the service improved their use of English in some way. For example:

The knowledge I learned from this, was how to divide a long sentence into several more logical shorter sentences, in order to make the reader easier to understand.

The other significant type was the scholastic: i.e. benefits derived from the service in relation to broader, non-language-specific educational advancement. In the following example a student refers to enhanced computer skills:

The last thing I learnt was locking and unlocking documents. It will be very useful when you use your essay or report in University. It will protect your work so no one plagiarizes your own work.

In line with task instructions to state ‘your reason for choosing this particular service’, every text included some statement of purpose, accounting for 17.6% of text coverage. Most students identified a personal deficit or aspiration which they hoped the service could address. For example:

In order to improve my English communication skills and make many foreign friends, I joined Find Your Voice.

The fact that most students identified a personal weakness of some kind suggested that the task did foster reflective thought about individual needs and how services could meet them. However, this may be another example of Macfarlane and Gourlay’s (2009) ‘penitent self’ syndrome.

Statements of personal identity covered only 8.7% of total text, but were present in 78% of essays, typically in the first 1-2 sentences. Students expressed affiliation across three demographic categories, often connecting their biographical data with their service need. For example:

Academic discipline and service need:

As an accounting student, computing skill is considered as an essential skill, since most works are done in Excel. However, due to the lack of practice, my computing skill needs to be improved.

International student status and service need:

Since it was my first time studying in an English speaking country, I had a lot of difficulties understanding my lectures and tutorials.

New student status and service need:

However, this is the first semester I spend in Griffith University, I am not familiar with the library search system, so I asked library academic services for help.

These statements reflect the task instruction to write about both 'your academic situation' and 'your reason for choosing this particular service', although it was the students' initiative to posit the former as the reason for the latter. These connections bring to mind Smith's (2011, p. 213) view that reflection can be particularly meaningful when

[I]t allows us to examine the uniqueness of our individual 'positionality' within social systems... This could mean looking at how we align ourselves with particular identities (mother, father, doctor, nurse, patient, etc.) or how these identities encourage us to act in certain ways.

In defining themselves as young academics, cultural outsiders and/or higher education beginners, the students adopted meta-perspectives on their place in the university system and considered how the services might address their needs.

Conclusions

Taken as a whole, the texts displayed an even distribution of different types of writing, in line with the task instructions. A typical reflection was one-third description of the service, one-third evaluation, and one-third exposition of knowledge and skills gained (although the categories overlap). In addition, authors articulated reasons for choosing services, and

many linked these reasons to aspects of personal identity. The only task instruction that was poorly represented in the output was the directive to provide ‘suggestions for future personal development in this area’. It may be that this instruction lacked sufficient focus to elicit useful ideas. An alternative wording could be more specific, such as ‘explain whether you intend to return to this service’ and/or ‘comment on whether there are any other services that could address the learning needs discussed in your reflection’. Findings in relation to the task instructions support Dymont and O’Connell’s (2011, p. 94) contention that ‘educators need to provide very clear directions to students to invite deep reflection’.

With regard to student views on the utility of the task, analysis of evaluative comments in the texts suggests that the USRT was a constructive exercise. The vast majority of comments were positive, and even the negative ones tended to be inverse compliments—e.g. requesting that learning sessions be extended. However, designers of reflective tasks need to inoculate against the so-called ‘reflection game’ (Macfarlane and Gourley, 2009, p. 455-6), whereby students ‘eat humble pie’ before affecting ‘revelation’ and finally ‘conversion’ to whatever conventional wisdom is espoused by instructors. Two ways to avoid this are to (a) reduce the incentive by providing formative assessment only, and (b) clearly inform learners that the purpose of the assignment is to give vent to honest thoughts and feelings. In relation to (a), the USRT instructions state that ‘[i]f this task is not submitted, 10% will be deducted from the final portfolio score’. The 10% penalty guards against the downside to formative assessment: that some students do not value assignments that receive no grade. However, to determine whether students are being overly positive in their evaluative comments to please teachers, the instructions could be elaborated to make the formative assessment process more transparent: e.g. ‘You do not receive a grade for this assignment, but your tutor will provide feedback on your reflections. You will only be penalized if you do not submit the assignment (10% will be deducted from the final portfolio score).’ To address issue (b), an additional instruction could be added, such as, ‘You are encouraged to reflect deeply and personally on the experience. There is no right, wrong or expected answer. If you have an unsatisfactory service experience, explain why!’.

Future iterations of the task could tap into the knowledge and perspectives of those students who regularly use support services, perhaps reproducing their impressions in handouts or on video, as material for class discussion. Such resources could also incorporate brief, punchy specifications of

potential benefits in order to promote the underutilized services, such as Student Linx, university clubs, and careers guidance.

This project was a valuable experiment in addressing a common problem: the mismatch between the number of learning opportunities available at universities and the under-utilization of them by EAL students. The findings presented in this chapter have focused on the success/failure of the task from a materials development perspective, looking at whether the intentions of the task are realized in the actions and output of the learners. A broader evaluation would attempt to measure longer-term effects of the task in regards to student autonomy and, ideally, language development. The number of confounding variables at play makes this difficult, however various sections of the university that oversee services offered in this task report impressive gains in the years since the task commenced. For example, the number of international students voluntarily booking one-to-one English language consultations has nearly doubled, and the number of international and local students mixing through Student Linx has nearly quadrupled (although a variety of factors in addition to the task would account for these figures).

The development of materials that promote out-of-class academic language and learning opportunities is likely to increase, given trends in higher education worldwide of (a) massification (making in-class tasks less feasible); (b) online learning (necessitating independent tasks); and (c) increasing numbers of EAL learners (making EAP central to pedagogical practice across the disciplines). As the *Good Practice Principles* document suggests, students will experience an increased responsibility for self-directed learning, but at the same time universities will be expected to scaffold such learning behaviours. A large slice of this challenge will fall to EAP materials designers.

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