RESEARCH PAPER

Bridging programmes: preparation for undergraduate study through the medium of English

An international perspective

Ian McGrath and Stephen Bailey

CfBT Education Trust

Welcome to CfBT Education Trust

CfBT Education Trust is a leading charity providing education services for public benefit in the UK and internationally. Established 40 years ago, CfBT Education Trust now has an annual turnover exceeding £100 million and employs more than 2,000 staff worldwide who support educational reform, teach, advise, research and train.

Since we were founded, we have worked in more than 40 countries around the world. Our work involves teacher and leadership training, curriculum design and school improvement services. The majority of staff provide services direct to learners in schools or through projects for excluded pupils, in young offender institutions and in advice and guidance for young people.

We have worked successfully to implement reform programmes for governments throughout the world. Current examples include the UK Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) Programme for Gifted and Talented Education and a nationwide teacher training programme for the Malaysian Ministry of Education.

Other government clients include the Brunei Ministry of Education, the Abu Dhabi Education Council, aid donors such as the European Union (EU), the Department for International Development (DfID), the World Bank, national agencies such as the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), and local authorities.

Surpluses generated by our operations are reinvested in educational research and development. Our new research programme – Evidence for Education – will improve educational practice on the ground and widen access to research in the UK and overseas.

Visit **www.cfbt.com** for more information.

Contents

About the authors

Ian McGrath is an Associate Professor in TESOL at the University of Nottingham. Widely experienced as a teacher of English, teacher trainer and trainer trainer, he has carried out numerous overseas consultancies for the British Council and other agencies and since 2004 has been an inspector of English language courses for the accreditation scheme administered by the British Council. His book 'Materials Evaluation and Design for Language Teaching' (Edinburgh University Press, 2002) is a standard text on MA TESOL programmes.

Stephen Bailey is a freelance teacher and writer of materials for English for Academic Purposes. He has taught international students in several UK universities, and also in the Czech Republic, Japan, Malaysia and Spain. He is the author of 'Academic Writing, a practical guide for students', and is currently working on a writing coursebook for business students.

Acknowledgements

A number of people have generously given of their time to provide information, advice, ideas and other forms of help. In particular, we are grateful to (in alphabetical order): Sara Cotterall, Michael Gibbs, Sandra Haywood, Angela Joe, Dave Laming, Tony Lynch, Elena McCretton, David Porter, John Read, Diane Schmitt, Ann Smith and David Thomson.

Thanks are also due to Natasha McGrath for help with basic research and editing.

Abbreviations

BALEAP British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes

EFL 'English as a Foreign Language, typically used to refer to: (a) the teaching of English in countries where it does not have a significant role as a language of communication in the major state institutions (such as government, the law, education). Examples are teaching English in France, China, Brazil. It is carried out in state schools and private schools; (b) the teaching of English in the UK to students from countries referred to in (a). In the UK it is typically carried out in private language schools and further education colleges' (Williams and Williams, 2007: 3). See also ESL and ESOL, below.

EAP English for Academic Purposes. The earliest attempts to support overseas students in British universities were made in the mid-1960s (Jordan, 2002). The teachers on these individual initiatives first came together to discuss their work at an informal meeting in 1972, when they formed an association called SELMOUS (Special English Language Materials for Overseas University Students), with the emphasis, as the title suggests, on sharing teaching materials. In 1975 this held its first national conference at Birmingham University, the papers from which, published two years later, included the term EAP in the title, possibly for the first time. SELMOUS became BALEAP (British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes) in 1989, reflecting a change of emphasis from materials development to wider issues including research.

EOP English for Occupational Purposes, i.e. English for specific forms of employment (engineers, nurses, the hospitality industry – and, potentially, more specialised roles within these areas e.g. English for waiters). EOP courses are normally distinguished from courses preparing non-native speakers of English for study in a specialist discipline (e.g. English for students of business/medicine/engineering), which are a form of specialised EAP – see also ESP, below.

ESL 'English as a Second Language, typically used: (a) at a national level, to refer to English in countries where it has a significant role as a language of communication in major state institutions (such as government, the law, education) but where it is not the home language of the population. For the most part, these countries are ex-British colonies (e.g. English is a 'second' language in India, Nigeria, Zambia); (b) to refer to English as a language taught to non-English speaking migrants to the UK, whether economic migrants or refugees, typically delivered by voluntary and/or government supported institutions. The term ESL is this sense is increasingly being replaced by ESOL' (Williams and Williams, ibid.).

ESOL 'English for Speakers of Other Languages. This is typically used in English-speaking countries such as the USA, Australia and New Zealand to refer to both EFL and ESL. It is increasingly being used as a similar 'cover term' in the UK, although many in the UK still use it as a synonym of ESL (b). The use of the term ESOL was adopted at an institutional and regional policy level in the 1990s as it was felt to represent more accurately the many multilingual learners for whom English was a third or fourth language' (Williams and Williams, ibid.)

ESP English for Specific Purposes. Special- (later, specific-) purpose English has developed into two broad branches: English for Academic Purposes or EAP (see above) and English for Occupational Purposes or EOP (see above).

GE	General English
IATEFL	International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (UK based)
IEP	Intensive English Programme (USA)
(I)FP	(International) Foundation Programme
NNS(s)	non-native speaker(s) (of English)
NS(s)	native speaker(s) (of English)
PG	postgraduate
PIM	Professional Interest Meeting
SIG	Special Interest Group
TESOL	Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (also the USA-based association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages)
UG	undergraduate

Acronyms

CAE	Certificate in Advanced English, one of a graduated suite of examinations offered by Cambridge ESOL (formerly, the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate or UCLES); CAE is at a lower level than CPE (see below)
CPE	Certificate of Proficiency in English
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education (UK, typically taken at 15–16)
HESA	Higher Education Statistical Agency (UK)
IELTS	International English Language Testing Service (test of suitability for study through the medium of English, developed and administered by Cambridge ESOL, the British Council and IDP: IELTS Australia)
NEAB	Northern Examination and Assessment Board (UK)
SAT	formerly known as the Scholastic Aptitude or Assessment Test, this has been replaced by the SAT Reasoning Test. It is a requirement for admission to an American university.
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language (American equivalent to IELTS)

Executive summary

"Bridging programmes serve to bridge a perceived gap between students' existing English language proficiency and/or academic level and the level deemed to be necessary for undergraduate (UG) study through the medium of English."

1. Bridging programmes

English-medium universities require evidence that an applicant has a level of English such that they can cope with a course taught through the medium of English. Although universities may accept a range of English language qualifications, the most widely accepted international English language qualifications are IELTS and TOEFL. An alternative route to acceptance is through a ***bridging*** course.

Bridging programmes serve to bridge a perceived gap between students' existing English language proficiency and/or academic level and the level deemed to be necessary for undergraduate (UG) study through the medium of English. In the UK (and Australia and New Zealand, but not the USA) a distinction is made between ***pre-sessional courses*** and ***(international) foundation programmes***. Pre-sessionals, which tend to be shorter (4–12 weeks), are primarily intended for students who have been offered a place conditional on their achieving a given level of English; many of these will have applied for entry to postgraduate (PG) rather than UG courses. Such courses focus on English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and study skills. Foundation programmes, which typically last two–three terms, are designed for students whose academic qualifications (and perhaps English language proficiency) do not meet university entry requirements; the use of the term 'international' in the UK distinguishes these courses from foundation or access programmes intended for home students. Course content includes not only compulsory EAP and study skills components but also a choice of subject-specific electives. Though some students will return to their own countries, most hope to progress to UG study and will submit an application in the course of the foundation year.

Outside the Anglophone countries, foundation (or preparatory) programmes will normally be geared towards entry to a particular institution and focus more narrowly on the development of English language proficiency and study skills.

Most pre-sessional programmes are offered by universities, and students who have been offered a conditional place will normally attend a course at the university that has made them an offer. In all English-speaking countries a wide range of state-sector institutions and private schools and colleges offer university foundation-type programmes, often in partnership with specific local universities. In the USA, intensive English programmes (IEP) and other courses which provide exemption from the first two years of a university degree can be taken in a community college, and this is a popular entry route to UG study for international students.

A number of universities in English-speaking countries now provide targeted 'offshore' foundation programmes to widen access and keep student costs to a minimum. Many Anglophone universities also have close academic links (exchange programmes, collaborative courses) with institutions in non-English-speaking countries.

In the last few years, three private sector organisations (Kaplan, INTO and Study Group) have established links with UK universities to offer a package of provision to overseas students; Study Group also has links in the USA and Australia. They generally form partnerships with the university and develop on-campus colleges which prepare students they have themselves recruited internationally. These specialist operators emphasise the fact that their courses lead directly to a university place, and that during the foundation year students are essentially part of the university body; such benefits are not limited to this type of programme, of course.

2. The gap between school and university

The demands of English-medium tertiary level study are qualitatively as well as quantitatively different from those of traditional school-based study of a language: the focus is no longer on the language as an object of study but on the language as a means of access to information and a medium of communication. It is assumed that students can deploy their knowledge to participate fully and effectively in a specialist course of study. In a lecture, for example, they will be expected to listen for meaning, ask relevant questions, read handouts and make notes, skills which are rarely taught in English classes as part of a school course. Moreover, they need to be familiar not just with the specific vocabulary of their specialist subjects but also the semi-formal and objective language of academic journal articles, language which they must be able to understand and reproduce in their own writing. The language and skills needed for further education through the medium of English are normally referred to as English for Academic Purposes (EAP), in contrast to General English (GE).

Apart from the language skills needed to cope efficiently with university-level study, students also need to acquire study skills which have not been taught in schools. This may be a relatively simple matter such as knowing how to present a report, but also includes much more significant areas such as learning how to cope with the volume of reading by reading selectively and how to refer to sources. While study skills or technical competences might be an appropriate way to refer to some of the novel demands of tertiary-level study, other features of the new environment may require a change of attitude, an adjustment to a new (academic) culture, new conventions and expectations. Bridging programmes can also fulfil a broader purpose in enabling students to adjust socially and culturally to a new environment. When they take place within the institution where students will subsequently study, they allow for physical orientation and, often, contact with subject lecturers. They also encourage the formation of friendships which may provide important emotional support during times of stress.

3. Issues

Many of the issues relating to bridging programmes are comparable to other types of course (e.g. to ensure that course content and materials are appropriate to the level and meet students' needs, to maintain motivation, to find reliable ways of measuring student progress). However, one of the distinctive features of bridging programmes is that they prepare students for study through the medium of English. This raises at least two issues: how to enable students to build on their GE knowledge to acquire the 'general academic' language that will be needed, and how to provide for the discipline-specific needs of individuals, especially within very heterogeneous classes. A related question is how to equip students with the study skills they need if they do not have these already, and how to integrate this strand with other components.

A central issue is that of the relationship between entry levels and target levels. In the major Anglophone countries, English language entry levels are typically in the region IELTS 6.5-6.0 and TOEFL 600-550 (paper-based) or 90-80 (internet-based); elsewhere, these may be lower (e.g. IELTS 5.5-4.5). IELTS guidance notes for institutions recommend that the level required be related to the academic and linguistic demands of the programme; hence, the more linguistically demanding courses, such as law or medicine, may require higher language proficiency entry qualifications.

High status institutions can set exacting entry standards, which also apply to English language proficiency. Lower status institutions may be obliged to set lower English language entry levels and, to meet financial targets, even relax these. This affects not only the student concerned, who may find difficulty coping with the linguistic demands of the course, but also teaching staff and other students. The problem is compounded by the low predictive validity of IELTS and TOEFL and the difficulty of establishing comparability between these

> *Institutions thus need to be very aware of the implications when they set English-language entry requirements. Financial benefits have to be weighed against the costs of remedial support, the human cost (to students and staff), and the possible cost to the reputation of the institution.*

external measures and internal assessments conducted during a bridging course.

Institutions thus need to be very aware of the implications when they set English-language entry requirements. Financial benefits have to be weighed against the costs of remedial support, the human cost (to students and staff), and the possible cost to the reputation of the institution. Where successful completion of a foundation course offers direct entry to UG study, there is a need to ensure that 'success' is clearly defined for students and for receiving departments and, if appropriate, to specify different levels of success for particular progression routes.

Where entry to a UG course is via a bridging programme, the relationship between entry levels to bridging programmes and target exit levels is also a key issue. Exit levels will be determined by a variety of factors, including course length and intensity and individual differences such as motivation and aptitude. However, a key factor will be entry level. In New Zealand, where there is a uniform requirement of IELTS 6.0 for entry to universities, there is only a small degree of institutional variation (5.0-5.5) in requirements for admission to foundation courses; in the UK, where entry levels for university tend to be a little higher, the requirement may be as low as 4.0 for a three-term programme. Outside the Anglophone countries, where both entry levels and target exit levels tend to be lower, there must be a serious question about students' ability to perform maximally on an English-medium course.

4. Research

The importance of needs analysis is one of the characteristics that distinguish EAP from GE, and research in EAP over the last 30 years or so has focused on the analysis of subject texts (written and spoken), latterly aided by computerised corpora, and the nature of academic interactions. This research has contributed to the formulation of course objectives and the specification of course content. Discussions continue, however, about the extent to which a common core of academic discourse can be specified and whether this should be taught first, alongside or subsumed within the teaching of subject-specific language. Student-focused research in English-speaking countries has also revealed adjustment difficulties that can be attributed in part to a lack of socio-cultural awareness and awareness of 'Western' academic conventions and expectations. As a result, courses typically contain components dealing with study skills and, if appropriate, provide cultural orientation and academic acculturation in a broader sense. This has, however, been criticised as the imposition of a culturally-specific model of education.

Effective course frameworks seem to address the need for the following:

1. *individualisation*: flexible pathways take account of different entry levels and subject-specific needs, and there is careful overall coordination and individual guidance; on a more limited level, individual needs are catered for through guided self-study, ideally in a well-equipped self-access centre, and individual projects
2. *relevance*: the involvement of subject specialists lends credibility and the personal contact can be reassuring; in 'general academic' classes, consideration is given to the perceived relevance of text and task; there is clarity concerning the intended function of course components (e.g. remedial vs foundational; study skills)
3. *independent study*: is encouraged and facilitated.

One general implication of the foregoing is that EAP teachers require a level of formal training beyond that of the GE teacher. This has been recognised, and a small number of courses are now available.

5. Recommendations for further research

Within the period available for the literature review, no reports were found of research conducted outside the Anglophone countries or former British colonies. However, English-medium programmes at both UG and PG

level, and support for these in the form of bridging programmes and in-sessional courses, are now widespread. There is a need not only to broaden the research base but also to encourage wider participation by involving those who have until now only considered themselves as teachers.

Further research would seem to be merited, *inter alia*, into the following:

English in schools: The transition to tertiary-level study through the medium of English will clearly be smoother if a sound foundation is laid while students are still at school. How far do state schools attempt to prepare students for tertiary education through the medium of English? Where this is an aim, what approach is used to realise it and what factors constrain its realisation?

Course design and methodology: The language-oriented objective of bridging programmes is to enable students to cope comfortably with the linguistic demands of tertiary-level study. What are the implications of admitting students to bridging programmes with relatively low English language proficiency levels (e.g. IELTS 4.0 or lower) e.g. for course length and intensity, for the sequencing of course components, and for materials selection? At what point, and how, is EAP introduced, and what topics form the focus of EAP-related skills practice? Where classes are non-homogeneous, to what extent, and in what ways, do courses take account of differences between students (e.g. differences in language proficiency or language profile, educational level, study skills, intended subject-specialisation)? Where courses provide for large numbers of students of the same nationality, what account is taken of their common needs (e.g. social and academic acculturation)? What approaches have been found to be helpful in developing a capacity for autonomous learning and critical thinking? How far do programmes in non-Anglophone countries teach not only ways of understanding culturally specific academic conventions but also the production of these? How successful is this in contexts far removed from Anglophone countries?

Resources for teaching and learning: The relevance of a course will be judged by students partly on the basis of the topics, texts and tasks through which language is practised and taught. Which published materials are being used for what types of students and student levels? What are teachers' and students' views of the value of these? How are published materials used (exploited, modified, supplemented)? To what extent are students exposed to authentic (i.e. first-year UG) reading and listening (written texts, recorded or live texts)? How is their understanding of such texts facilitated? What online resources (including web-based resources) are available for self-access learning? How are students prepared for use of these? To what extent do they use them, how do they evaluate them, and what evidence is there of their effectiveness? What problems have institutions found in establishing, resourcing and maintaining self-access centres?

Learner assessment: What is the minimum level of English, defined in terms of, e.g. IELTS/TOEFL or bridging programme exit scores, necessary for a student to cope comfortably with the linguistic demands of a UG course in X and institution Y?

Introduction

1.1 The importance of English

Native speakers (NSs) of English are outnumbered by native speakers of Mandarin Chinese, and possibly Spanish and Hindi-Urdu (Graddol, 2006). The importance of English as an international language is thus in large measure due to the economic strength of English-speaking countries. As Hyland and Hamp-Lyons (2002) point out, 'for countries that are trying to lift themselves into economic prominence, or to remain major players on the world economic stage, producing an annual crop of graduates who can function in employment through English is a major issue' (pp 1-2). Given the additional importance of English as the major language of the internet, it is hardly surprising that learners of English as a second (ESL) or foreign language (EFL) far exceed learners of any other language.

The central role played by English as an official or second language – in government, law and education, for instance – is a legacy of colonisation in some countries. It may also serve, paradoxically, as a politically neutral means of inter-ethnic communication. However, its increasing adoption as a medium of instruction in universities elsewhere, together with the provision of English-language support in the form of courses in English for academic purposes (EAP), is a recognition both of its value as a language of international communication and the fact that the majority of academic sources in some disciplines are in English; English is now effectively an academic lingua franca. The large numbers of private schools of English all over the world also attest to the widespread interest in learning English for general as well as specific purposes, and the major Anglophone countries (USA, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand) attract not only short-stay students and teachers of English but also those who are bent on pursuing university-level studies.

"As Hyland and Hamp-Lyons (2002) point out, 'for countries that are trying to lift themselves into economic prominence, or to remain major players on the world economic stage, producing an annual crop of graduates who can function in employment through English is a major issue'"

1.2 Focus of the report

This report analyses the need for what will be termed 'bridging programmes'. These are preparatory courses for non-native speakers (NNSs) of English wishing to undertake English-medium undergraduate (UG) study in Anglophone countries and elsewhere. It examines the range of such programmes available internationally and identifies effective practices for their design and delivery. Suggestions are also made for further research.

Although it draws on information from those with experience of English-medium education in a variety of contexts outside the UK, detailed consideration of the situation in these contexts has not been attempted. The research outlined here is international in scope and origin, and reflects the global concerns of the EAP community, but is intended to be indicative rather than comprehensive. Moreover, the desk-based nature of the research means that consideration of key issues relating to the design, delivery and evaluation of bridging courses derives largely from the literature and our own experience rather than first-hand accounts of practitioners. These shortcomings could be overcome by further research, of course, and we make some suggestions for this towards the end of this report.

Section 2 of the report provides an overview of the language requirements for undergraduate entry to a selection of UK and leading English medium universities worldwide. This includes a description and comparison of the two leading entry tests, IELTS and TOEFL. Section 3 then provides further information on the two types of bridging programme referred to above, (International) Foundation Programmes and Pre-sessional courses. Section 4 discusses issues relating to the design of bridging programmes and research into these, and Section 5 makes recommendations for further research. The concluding section reiterates the importance of continuing support for English language learning.

"… the focus is no longer on the language [English] as an object of study but on the language as a means of access to information and a medium of communication"

1.3 Bridging programmes

English-medium universities require evidence that an applicant has a level of English such that they can cope with a course taught through the medium of English. Although universities may accept a range of English language qualifications, the most widely accepted international English language qualifications are IELTS and TOEFL (see Section 2), and an applicant with the required score and the required level of academic qualifications can normally enter their chosen course directly.

It is not necessary to attend a course in order to prepare for IELTS or TOEFL, but many choose to do a general English (GE) course, which includes preparation for one of these as a component. Since a GE course is not, however, intended to prepare students for UG English-medium study, such courses fall outside the scope of the report.

A variety of terms are used in the English-speaking academic world to describe courses that are more specifically designed to prepare NNSs of English for university education through the medium of English. In the UK, the most common of these are:

1. **Pre-sessional courses**: for students who have been offered a place conditional on their achieving a given level of English; many of these will have applied for entry to postgraduate (PG) rather than UG courses. Such courses focus on English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and study skills.
2. **(International) Foundation Programmes**: for students whose academic qualifications (and perhaps English language proficiency) do not meet university entry requirements; the use of the term 'international' in the UK distinguishes these courses from foundation or access programmes intended for home students. Course content includes not only compulsory EAP and study skills components but also a choice of subject-specific electives. Though some students will return to their own countries, most hope to progress to UG study at a British university. Some universities offer a separate pre-Masters foundation programme.

Similar language-focused courses exist outside the UK, but may be referred to using rather different terms. In the USA, for instance, English language programmes serving the same purpose are typically known as *Intensive English Programmes* (IEP). Universities may also use specific rather than generic terms to refer to their programmes. In New Zealand, for instance, Victoria University awards a Certificate of Proficiency in English and Canterbury University a Certificate of English for Tertiary Studies. Outside the Anglophone countries, other terms used include *academic bridge programme* (Education City, Qatar) and *preparatory English programme* (Turkey).

Since all these programmes have a broadly similar core purpose, to bridge the gap between the existing and target English language competence of the NNS, the term 'bridging programme' will be used in this report as a general term for courses which have this function. Further differences between what we will henceforth refer to as foundation and pre-sessional courses are outlined in Section 3.

1.4 The need for bridging programmes

University entrance requirements may be one way of explaining the need for bridging programmes: they exist to fill a perceived gap. One might, however, also ask with reference to English language proficiency why that gap exists and, in relation to academic standards, to what extent the perception of a gap is based on evidence or assumption.

This is perhaps not the place to question assumptions concerning differences in academic standards between the products of different educational systems. As far as English language proficiency is concerned, a number of related factors would seem to be relevant. For the majority of students at school, where English is seen as a subject, alongside Maths and Science, the main objective of English

language learning is to acquire sufficient knowledge and understanding to achieve a given level in an examination. In a university-level course taught through the medium of English, on the other hand, it is assumed that students can deploy their knowledge to participate fully and effectively in a specialist course of study; the focus is no longer on the language as an object of study but on the language as a means of access to information and a medium of communication.

In view of the significance of school-leaving examinations, the content and emphases of the later years of school-based English courses will inevitably be tuned to the requirements of the final examination. Given the practical difficulties of large-scale testing, this may prioritise what can be conveniently tested (for example, knowledge of grammar, reading comprehension and writing). In short, courses in secondary schools will typically focus on what we might think of as GE and will attach importance to listening and speaking only if these are important components of the examination. There are exceptions to this, of course: for instance, international baccalaureate schools and other schools where English is used as the medium of instruction for all or some subjects, and schools in which English language courses are targeted towards further educational needs. In many contexts, however, English in school is an inadequate preparation for study through the medium of English, and even if school leavers have achieved the basic level of English required for entry to university many will need in-sessional language support.

"… despite significant variations between university students' specific academic needs… most students need English to take part in lectures, seminars, tutorials, group projects, practicals, private study and examinations"

The fact is that, despite significant variations between university students' specific academic needs, for example between courses in journalism and engineering, most students need English to take part in lectures, seminars, tutorials, group projects, practicals, private study and examinations. In all these situations they will not simply draw on their existing skills in reading, speaking, listening and writing but have to acquire 'new kinds of literacy' (Hyland and Hamp Lyons, 2002: 2). In a lecture, for example, they will be expected to listen for gist, ask relevant questions, read handouts and make notes (Gillett & Wray, 2006), skills which are rarely taught in English classes as part of a school course. Moreover, they need to be familiar not just with the specific vocabulary of their specialist subjects but also the semi-formal and objective language of academic journal articles, language that they must be able to understand and reproduce in their own writing. The language and skills needed for further education through the medium of English are normally referred to as English for Academic Purposes (EAP), in contrast to GE.

Apart from the language skills needed to cope efficiently with university-level study, students also need to acquire study skills that have not been taught in schools. This may be a relatively simple matter such as knowing how to present a report, but also includes much more significant areas such as learning how to cope with the volume of reading by reading selectively and how to refer to sources (i.e. to paraphrase, summarise, and reference appropriately).

While study skills or technical competences might be an appropriate way to refer to some of the novel demands of tertiary-level study, other features of the new environment may require a change of attitude, an adjustment to a new (academic) culture, new conventions and expectations (e.g. the expectation that students will ask questions if they do not understand, that they will be willing to voice their own ideas and ready to critique those of others and, more broadly, the expectation that they will take responsibility for their own learning). Many Chinese students, for example, used to a system where their teachers are respected figures who closely control their learning and whose authority should not be questioned, complain that in the UK academic system they are not given enough guidance and have too much free time (Demirkan-Jones, 2006). Clearly, it is not easy to change such deep-seated attitudes to study, but if no attempt is made students may assume that there are no cultural differences and act accordingly (Wilhelm, 1997). For this reason, study skills – in the broad sense of the term – form a key element of international foundation

programmes and pre-sessional courses, and are appreciated by students: 'You learn how to write in an academic way, you learn what teachers expect of you, and you get an idea of what you're going to face next year' (testimonial from Greek student on website of Oxford Brookes University, UK).

Bridging programmes can also fulfil a broader purpose in enabling students to adjust socially and culturally to a new environment. As Afful (2007) puts it, they have a 'preparatory, facilitative *and catalytic* role' (p.3, emphasis added). When they take place within the institution where students will subsequently study, they allow for physical orientation and, often, contact with subject lecturers. They also encourage the formation of friendships, which may provide important emotional support.

2. English language entry requirements for English-medium universities

As education becomes increasingly globalised, a growing number of students aim to study all or part of their first degrees in another country. They may feel that an overseas university offers a better education in their subject, or that it will provide the opportunity to gain fluency in another language, or indeed provide other social skills. At the same time universities attempt to create an international cohort of students, partly to draw on a wider pool of excellence, partly because an international student body is seen as an asset, and also because of funding benefits. As a result, in the UK for example, more than 14% of students now come from overseas (HESA figures for 2005/6).

Examples of English language entry requirements for international students are given in Tables 1 and 2. It should be noted that these do not apply where students have completed a large part of their pre-university education in English, as might be the case with students from Singapore.

Table 1 English language entry requirements for undergraduate study at a selection of UK universities

University	National rank*	IELTS	TOEFL	GCSE	CAE	CPE	Other
London School of Economics (LSE)	3	7.0 minimum 7.0 in each part	627 pb 107 ib	C	B	pass	NEAB pass Cambridge English Language (1119) Grade 6 Successful completion of Foundation or Pre-sessional course
Bristol	31	6.5 minimum 6.5 in each part	600 pb 100 ib	C		C	NEAB pass Cambridge English Language (1119) Grade 6 Successful completion of International Foundation Year Programme Successful completion of Pre-sessional EAP course (5/10 weeks)
Derby	98	6.0	550 pb 80 ib	C	pass	pass	Successful completion of Pre-sessional EAP course (4 weeks)

* Ranking from *Education Guardian* 13/5/2008

TOEFL: pb = paper-based; ib = internet-based. GCSE: General Certificate of Secondary Education. CAE: Certificate of Advanced English (Cambridge ESOL). CPE: Certificate of Proficiency in English (Cambridge ESOL). NEAB: Northern Examination & Assessment Board. See Appendix 1 for details of IELTS and TOEFL tests.)

Note that the above requirements are in each case the university's minimum. Linguistically demanding courses, e.g. law, may require higher standards. In some cases universities list a more extensive range of acceptable qualifications, such as country-specific exams.

Table 2: English Language entry requirements for undergraduate study at a range of leading international universities

NB As the focus of this report is on undergraduate courses, only universities in English-speaking countries have been included. Many European universities, for example, teach in English at Masters level only.

World rank*	University	Country	IELTS	TOEFL	Other
10	Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)	USA	For some subjects	Min 577 pb / 90 ib, but 600 / 100 preferred	Also 2 SAT subject tests (maths 1 or 2 and science) MIT's English Evaluation Test (EET) twice yearly
16	Australian National University	Australia	6.5, with min. 6.0 in each sub-test	570 pb / 90 ib	No reference to other internationally recognised exams
33 =	University of British Columbia	Canada	6.5, with min. 6.0 in each sub-test	55 in each part pb / 86 ib	CAE grade B CPE grade C
33 =	National University of Singapore	Singapore	6.0	550 pb / 80 ib	No reference to other internationally recognised exams
44	University of New South Wales	Australia	6.5, with min. 6.0 in each sub-test	577 pb / 90 ib	Pass at grade C+ in 10-week pre-sessional course
53	Hong Kong University of Science & Technology	Hong Kong	6.0	550 pb / 80 ib	CAE grade C Malaysian University English Test Band 4
77	Purdue University	USA	6.5	550 pb / 79 ib	GCE – B Pass in SAT – 480 12-month English Language programme offered as preparation for undergraduate entry

* Ranking from *Times Higher Education – QS World Top 100 universities* (2007)

TOEFL: pb = paper-based / ib = internet-based. SAT: standardised reasoning test for college admission in the USA. CAE: Certificate in Advanced English (Cambridge ESOL). CPE: Certificate of Proficiency in English (Cambridge ESOL)

Though some universities accept a range of English-language qualifications, the most widely accepted tests of English proficiency are the IELTS and TOEFL, the former more commonly used in Britain and Australia, and the latter in the USA. Both tests are available worldwide and each has around one million candidates per year. More details of the two tests are given in Appendices 1 and 2.

It can be seen that the highest-ranked of the UK universities in the table, the London School of Economics (LSE), which makes higher academic demands of applicants, also requires higher IELTS scores – 7.0 minimum in all four areas, or a TOEFL score of 627 in the paper-based test. A more common requirement in the UK is 6.5 in IELTS and 600 in TOEFL, while the minimum demanded is 6.0 in IELTS and 550 in TOEFL. Minimum IELTS requirements are similar in Australia (6.0-6.5), but a little lower on average in New Zealand (where universities have a uniform minimum requirement of 6.0, generally with a minimum of 6.0 for speaking and writing and 5.5 for listening and reading). In non-Anglophone countries, entry requirements may be a little lower. IELTS guidance notes for institutions recommend that the level required be related to the academic and linguistic demands of the programme; hence, the more linguistically demanding courses, such as law or medicine, may require higher language proficiency entry qualifications.

These requirements notwithstanding, students who are admitted often struggle, and this causes stress and frustration, as these extracts from a case study of a Chinese student illustrate:

> I feel I cannot express myself adequately …
>
> I am nervous when I ask questions or spoke in a seminar. I am afraid of losing face.
>
> … when I was in the seminar, I often wonder whether people can understand me or whether they have the patience to listen to me.
>
> (Jin, 2007: 27)

It is clear from these quotations that confidence is an issue for this student, but if this lack of confidence stems – as it seems to – from limited communicative competence, we might question the measures taken to assess her language proficiency prior to entry, in this case to a Masters course at a UK university. The reality appears to be that high status institutions have no difficulty attracting well qualified applicants, lower status institutions may not only have to set lower entry requirements but – under the pressure of financial imperatives – even accept applicants who fail to meet these. The consequence is, as we have seen, that students suffer. Studies of the predictive validity of IELTS (e.g. Bayliss and Ingram, 2006; Bellingham, 1995, cited in Hirsh, 2007) found that the international students who were experiencing difficulty with their academic work were those with IELTS levels lower than those required. There are also wider repercussions. Subject lecturers find it difficult to engage NNSs in discussion and evaluate their work fairly (Ridley, 2006); moreover, even when formal language support is available – in the form of in-sessional courses, for instance – lecturers may feel obliged to provide additional informal help, especially with writing. There have also been instances of resentment on the part of NS students at the presence of large numbers of overseas students on their courses: 'a couple of recent New Zealand studies (Beaver and Tuck, 1998, Ministry of Education 2002) have identified the relatively negative attitude of many local students and staff towards having a mix of cultures and language skills in class, stemming from the perception that such a mix slows down the rate of instruction, and makes excessive demands on the lecturer' (Cameron and Meade, 2002: 8). See also a recent item on the BBC website **http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/7358528.stm** entitled 'Whistleblower warning on degrees' and the responses to this from students and academics.

Although this vicious circle may in part be caused by institutions failing to set the admission bar at the right level, or even lowering it when the financial winds are blowing strongly, institutions are not solely to

"… high status institutions have no difficulty attracting well qualified applicants, lower status institutions may not only have to set lower entry requirements but – under the pressure of financial imperatives – even accept applicants who fail to meet these"

blame. There is anecdotal evidence that some students get others to impersonate them in IELTS exams. Moreover, the examinations themselves are not foolproof; whatever precautions are taken a subjective element cannot be eliminated entirely from the assessment of speaking and writing tests, and tests which are of necessity 'general academic' cannot be a totally reliable predictor of students' ability to cope with the language and activities associated with a particular academic discipline. Summarising some of the research on the predictive validity of IELTS, Hirsh (2007) concludes that only the reading module of IELTS was a significant predictor of subsequent academic grades and that TOEFL is an equally poor predictor.

The issue of reliability (and validity) becomes a particular issue when the test of English proficiency accepted by an institution as an alternative to IELTS, TOEFL or some other internationally recognised qualification has been devised by EAP tutors on a foundation programme or pre-sessional course. This is not meant to disparage the efforts made by institutions and tutors to ensure reliability through the normal quality assurance mechanisms (i.e. double marking, moderation, External Examiner, who might also be expected to comment on validity) but merely to note the difficulty of creating tests, especially tests of listening and reading, which are equivalent in level to those developed by the major examining bodies, which have massive resources at their disposal. Indeed, the equivalence of the internationally recognised examinations is itself an issue, since IELTS and TOEFL do not test exactly the same aspects of language competence, and there is some variation in the TOEFL scores deemed by institutions to be equivalent to specific IELTS scores (see Tables 1 and 2). Appendix 2 shows approximate equivalences of IELTS, TOEFL (internet-based), Cambridge ESOL examinations (CPE, CAE, FCE) and the Common European Framework.

A number of conclusions suggest themselves.

1. Institutions need to be very aware of the implications when they set English-language entry requirements. Financial benefits have to be weighed against the costs of remedial support (Hirsh, 2007), the human cost (to students and staff), and the possible cost to the reputation of the institution.
2. Bridging programmes are primarily intended to serve two purposes: to enable students to achieve the level of English required for entry to their chosen course and to filter out those who have not reached the required level. Where successful completion of a foundation course offers direct entry to UG study, there is a need to ensure that 'success' is clearly defined (for students and for receiving departments – see Banerjee and Wall, 2006) and, if appropriate, to specify different levels of success for particular progression routes. This would require research (see 3, below).
3. In order to determine the level of English needed to cope with a particular course, institutions need to track students with different IELTS/TOEFL scores, and since many institutions offer similar courses, a concerted research effort might lead to more reliable results. This might be combined with initial diagnostic testing to identify and advise on the level and form of continuing support needed by a particular individual. Brief descriptions of the Canadian Academic English Language (CAEL) assessment and the Diagnostic English Language Needs Assessment (DELNA) devised by Auckland University, New Zealand (which is equivalent to the Diagnostic English Language Assessment (DELA) of the University of Melbourne, Australia) can be found in Hirsh (2007: 200-2).
4. Some institutions indicate a 'normal' rate of progress (e.g. in IELTS grade points) that can be expected on completion of a course of a particular intensity and duration. Whether this is achieved will depend on entry levels and individual differences (aptitude, motivation); it is therefore important that indicators of progress are not interpreted as guarantees.

"In order to determine the level of English needed to cope with a particular course, institutions need to track students with different IELTS/ TOEFL scores, and since many institutions offer similar courses, a concerted research effort might lead to more reliable results."

5. Bridging programmes provide time and a relatively sheltered environment in which students can adjust to the environment and the kinds of demands that will be made of them. When a transition to living in another country and/or a different culture is involved, time for orientation and acculturation seems particularly desirable.

The next section takes a closer look at bridging programmes.

3. Types of bridging programme

3.1 Introduction

In the last 20 years there has been a huge growth in the number and type of programmes offered by universities and related institutions, which provide language preparation for academic study. As indicated in section 1.2, the focus here is on two types of bridging programme: foundation programmes and pre-sessional programmes.

3.2 Foundation Programmes

Foundation programmes typically last for two or three terms, with the entry-point normally being determined by the student's level of English, though these appear to be very variable. In the UK, for instance, they range from IELTS 4.0 to 5.5 for a three-term course; in New Zealand, there is only a small degree of institutional variation (5.0-5.5) in requirements for admission to foundation courses of a similar length.

There are four main types of providers of foundation programmes: universities themselves, local colleges in partnership with universities, private schools and colleges and specialist providers operating in conjunction with universities. Examples can be seen in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3: Examples of Foundation Courses in the UK

Institution	Course name	Entry	Length	Contents	Assessment
Bell School, Cambridge	University Foundation Programme	IELTS 4.5	1 year	Compulsory academic skills module + range of subject-specific modules	Coursework 60% exam 40% No links to specific universities
Middlesex University, London UK	International Foundation Programme	1 year – min. IELTS 4.5	6 months and 1 year	1-year programme – five compulsory modules (Academic skills, EAP, Researching & presenting, Academic writing, Understanding the global world) + optional subject-specific modules	Successful completion gives direct entry to Middlesex UG programmes
City & Islington College, London, UK	International Foundation Course	Min. IELTS 5.0; 5.5 for business students	1 year	3 compulsory (English & study skills, Personal development, Computing) + subject specific modules	Successful completion gives direct entry to City University
Nottingham Trent International College, Nottingham Trent University, UK (Kaplan)	Certificate in University Foundation Studies	IELTS 4.5 – 5.0	2 or 3 terms	Certificates are offered in Business, Computing, Law, Media and Art. All students also take modules in EAP and study skills.	On successful completion, Business & Computing students can enter Diploma courses; others proceed directly to first year UG.

Table 4: Examples of Foundation Courses outside the UK

Institution	Course name	Entry	Length	Contents	Assessment
Taylors College, Perth, Sydney and Melbourne, Australia	University Foundation Program	IELTS 5.0 – 5.5	1 year +	Various streams depending on future degree, e.g. Science/ Engineering/ Health Science/ Economics	English grade C required. Academic subjects GPA score
Nudgee International College, Queensland, Australia	University Foundation Program	IELTS 5.5	1 year	Academic English, Study skills, Maths, Computing + special subject modules	Successful completion gives direct entry to Queensland University of Technology, Griffith University or the University of the Sunshine Coast
Education City, Qatar	Academic Bridge Program	TOEFL ib 36 (autumn) / 51 (spring)	1 or 2 semesters depending on level	50% English language: reading, writing, grammar, listening and notemaking	Successful completion gives direct entry to one of the US universities in Education City or study abroad
Eastern Washington University, USA	Graduate Preparation Program	TOEFL 550 pb /80 ib	2 quarters (6 months)	50% English: writing research paper, giving presentations; 50% academic subjects	Successful completion gives direct entry to Eastern Washington University

Middlesex University, for instance, which has one of the largest groups of non-EU overseas students in Britain, offers foundation courses of six months and one year. Many FE colleges in the UK offer foundation year programmes specifically linked to courses at a local university, for example the City & Islington College feeds international students into City University. Most such programmes offer guaranteed entry to university courses on successful completion, but while some appear linked only to a single university, others have a range of partner institutions.

In the USA, IEP and other courses that provide exemption from the first two years of a university degree can be taken in a community college, and this is a popular entry route to UG study for international students. In other English-speaking countries a wide range of private schools and colleges offer university foundation-type programmes, often in partnership with specific local universities. In Australia, for example, both Taylors College and Nudgee International College provide one-year foundation courses, the former for Perth, Sydney and Melbourne, the latter in Queensland. In New Zealand, the Academic Colleges Group (ACG), a group of private colleges, run foundation programmes on behalf of the University of Auckland and Auckland University of Technology. In the last few years in the UK three private sector organisations (Kaplan, INTO and Study Group) have established links with universities to offer a package provision of overseas students. They generally form partnerships with the university and develop on-campus colleges, which prepare students they have themselves recruited internationally. Study Group also owns Taylors College in Australia and through international study centres in a small number of American colleges offers 'ESL transition programmes' for entry to UG programmes in the USA. These specialist operators emphasise the fact that their courses lead directly to a university place, and that during the foundation year students are essentially

part of the university body, able to use library facilities as well as take part in campus social life; these benefits are not exclusively limited to this type of programme, of course.

Foundation programmes typically consist of core courses in English, oriented towards the needs of academic study (i.e. EAP) and study skills, including information technology, and elective courses in academic subjects related to the students' future studies. The latter subjects are taught by subject specialists.

3.3 Pre-sessional courses

Pre-sessional courses, which focus narrowly on EAP and study skills, are typically taught in universities in Anglophone countries. These vary greatly in length, from one year to a few weeks. One common pattern in the UK is a series of 3 x 4-week end-on courses starting in July and finishing in September, just before the beginning of the academic year, with entry-points being determined by the student's English proficiency level. Some institutions now offer a graded three-term progression in which there is a gradual shift from GE towards EAP leading up to a pre-sessional of 10-12 weeks. The later stages of pre-sessionals may involve a degree of subject specialisation, with students from the same or related disciplines being grouped together or, more minimally, scope for students to undertake self-selected projects and presentations in their chosen discipline. For instance, the University of Manchester, which has the largest number of non-EU overseas students in the UK (2355 in 2007), offers 3-, 5-, 10- and 20-week pre-sessional courses through its University Language Centre. The longest course aims to increase students' IELTS scores by a full point, the 5- and 10-week courses by 0.5 points (although they require a high starting point in writing). The courses include work in the main skills areas: listening, speaking, reading and writing, along with a discipline-linked project, oral presentations and guest lectures. All these courses are accredited by the British Council and BALEAP (British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes).

3.4 The language component of bridging programmes

The content of most pre-sessionals and the non-subject-specific component of foundation programmes probably resembles in many respects that of the Manchester courses outlined above. Millar (2002) summarises this as 'linguistic acculturation (EAP)' and 'academic acculturation (study skills)' (p.13). Skills classes will raise awareness of ways in which lectures and written academic texts are structured, of strategies for effective reading, and of presentation techniques, and provide practice in all of these; and there will be attention to the development of oral fluency and accuracy, for example through the practice of seminar skills. In Anglophone countries, there may also be a cultural awareness component. Students will also be shown how to make use of electronic and conventional library resources, and expected to use these in a self-directed way to supplement classroom-based learning. In relation to foundation programmes, Millar (2002) suggests that a desirable additional component might be 'something to feed the imagination and interest of the student. Call it *educational extension of the non-instrumental kind*' (p.13, original emphasis).

Although the content of the components that make up a course may be fixed in the form of a syllabus, this will tend to be used as a framework or set of guidelines rather than something to be followed slavishly. One important way in which EAP courses differ from GE courses is in the attention paid to needs analysis, which should include not only the teachers' perceptions of student needs but also the students' own wants (which might extend to areas outside the classroom). It should also take into account the learning strategies of particular groups of students.

Various approaches to syllabus design have been utilised over the past thirty years of EAP practice, as Flowerdew and Peacock (2001a) note, but current models are usually either skills based or content based, i.e. based on materials taken from students' future subject of study. The use of authentic materials is to be encouraged, but not in every case, and

"… students… had reacted negatively to work on study skills such as skimming and scanning, note-taking and seminar presentations because they felt that these were irrelevant or that they already possessed these skills; … they saw study skills as 'learning about learning', rather than learning itself"

they stress that this is an issue on which a flexible approach is necessary. Where student groups are not homogeneous as to level or subject specialism, a compromise might be to use material of more general interest from semi-academic sources.

Afful (2007), with a Ghanaian university in mind, draws attention to the need to take account of both the 'foundational' and the 'remedial'. While recognising the need for remediation of weaknesses, he considers that more emphasis should be given to preparation for the radically new language demands with which the student will be faced. This, he feels, would empower students from less privileged educational backgrounds.

The principle of needs analysis and the extension of this to students' analysis of their own needs are reflected in the structure of a foundation programme at Oxford Brookes University. Millar (2002: 3) explains how differences in students' language level and interests can be taken into account within this programme:

Through the range of content modules, it provides several foundation pathways to a number of fields, e.g. business, social sciences, humanities, computing, hospitality studies and others. Students are encouraged to select modules according to their language needs, their future educational intentions, and their present educational interests. The role of the Field Chair in managing the course and in providing guidance to students is paramount. He or she has to liaise with the Personal Tutors, who are charged with the task of supervising students in compiling their individual programmes, and helping them to make adjustment should the need arise.

Several features of this programme merit comment:

1. there is differentiation by language level as well as by subject specialism in that additional foundation language modules (in Academic English and Grammar and Academic Writing) are available for students with an IELTS entry level below 6.0, and students have a choice between two alternative compulsory modules (Introduction to University Studies – for students with IELTS 5.0 or above and Key Academic Skills for International Students – for students with IELTS 6.0 or above);
2. students have the freedom to make choices from a range of so-called 'foundation' modules which are either closely related to subject specialisms (e.g. Foundation Economics) or more general (e.g. Perspectives on the Humanities, Inter-cultural Communication) and a set of 'basic' modules (e.g. Introduction to (Business), Political Ideologies);
3. the 'pathways' are individualised and therefore meaningfully coherent to the student concerned;
4. the coordinating role of the programme director (Field Chair) and the advisory role of the personal tutors are crucial.

3.5 The study skills component

Assumptions about students' needs on the part of programme designers do not necessarily find approval with students. Sinclair (1997), writing in the second year of a University of Hertfordshire, UK foundation programme, points out that 'students on this programme had reacted negatively to work on study skills such as skimming and scanning, note-taking and seminar presentations because they felt that these were irrelevant or that they already possessed these skills; a discussion with students to understand their point of view more fully revealed that they saw study skills as "learning about learning", rather than learning itself' (p.5). Solutions offered by Sinclair include closer integration between the foundation programme and that of first-year UG studies (e.g. incorporating real first-year study into the programme – for instance, by attending real first-year lectures, and by closer involvement of subject lecturers) and encouraging more independent study habits. Similar ideas have informed the development of other foundation programmes in recent years.

3.6 English-language support in leading international universities

Table 5, below, illustrates the variety of English language provision at a selection of highly rated international universities. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology has no programme at all. Two of the others, the University of British Columbia and the National University of Singapore, have specialist English teaching units, but while UBC offers a pre-sessional programme that satisfies the university's entry requirement, NUS only offers in-sessional courses to undergraduates once they have been admitted. At the University of New South Wales the EAP provision is a department of the Institute of Languages, but offers a similar type of pre-sessional course to UBC's.

The universities in Table 5 all figure in the top 50 in the world, an elite dominated by Anglophone countries.

3.7 The future

When bridging programmes take place at or near the students' intended university, they allow students to familiarise themselves with the social and academic context in which they will be working. A recent development, however, is that a number of universities in English-speaking countries now provide targeted 'offshore' foundation programmes to widen access and keep student costs to a minimum. For example, Lancaster University in the UK currently offers a programme based at three different universities in China and one in Nigeria. Similarly, the Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand offers an 8-month foundation studies programme at its campus in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Though oriented towards progression on to a Victoria University BA in Commerce and Administration, this is recognised as an entry qualification for all New Zealand universities. Many Anglophone universities also have close academic links (exchange programmes, collaborative courses) with institutions in non-English-speaking countries.

Table 5: English-language support in a selection of highly ranked international universities

University	Provider	Type of course	Details
MIT	none	none	
University of British Columbia	English Language Institute	Pre-sessional Intensive English Programme	10 / 12 week courses in 3 areas: Speaking & Listening, Reading, Writing. Students passing these at Level 600 (Proficiency) are accepted for UBC UG courses
National University of Singapore	Centre for English Language Communication	No pre-sessional	In-sessional courses for UG students in 6 faculties at various levels, e.g. in Arts & Social Sciences: Basic English + EAP
University of New South Wales	Institute of Languages – EAP Dept	Pre-sessional English Entry Course	10 week advanced English / advanced EAP. Course entry requires IELTS 6.0. Students passing course will be admitted to UNSW without need for external tests.

4. Issues and research

4.1 Introduction

Course design involves a number of decisions. Beyond those relating to duration and intensity, which may be outside the control of those directly concerned with this process, these are essentially:

- *Course content and methodology*: what and how to teach; these decisions will be based in part on the analysis of students' needs and other inputs to the formulation of course objectives, and include consideration of appropriate materials;
- *Learner assessment*: how to assess performance and progress.

Even leaving aside other external issues of accountability or student progression, principled course design will also consider:

- *Programme evaluation*: how to evaluate the programme itself.

Each of these major decisions inevitably gives rise to a range of issues. Jordan (2002), in a brief review of changes in EAP over the last thirty-plus years, mentions cooperation between EAP units and specialist departments; the teaching of academic culture – one aspect of which relates to learner autonomy; and developments in the teaching of writing. This section discusses these and other issues that have proved particularly salient in relation to bridging programmes and the research that they have stimulated.

In an attempt to bring some system to the review of research, we have examined the two international journals most likely to contain papers of interest: the *Journal of English for Academic Purposes (JEAP)*, from its launch in 2002 up to the time of writing, and the last ten years of the *ESP Journal (ESPJ)*. We have also consulted a variety of edited collections (e.g. Bool and Luford (1999) *Academic Standards and Expectations*; Flowerdew and Peacock (2001a) *Research Perspectives on English for Academic Purposes*; Sheldon (2004) *Directions for the Future: Issues in English for Academic Purposes*; Gillett and Wray (2006a) *Assessing the Effectiveness of EAP Programmes*, and conducted numerous labyrinthine web-searches. John Read was kind enough to supply a copy of a report on *English language levels in tertiary institutions in New Zealand* (Read and Hirsh, 2005), and Angela Joe provided a link to David Hirsh's (2007) paper 'English language, academic support and academic outcomes: a discussion paper'.

Although the major focus is on research into bridging programmes as preparation for UG study, there is occasional reference to the first year of UG programmes and research involving PG students where this seemed relevant. Any omissions are not meant to imply a value judgement, of course; our concern has been simply to indicate and illustrate general trends in research in this area.

4.2 Course content and methodology

4.2.1 How subject-specific should/ can a bridging programme be?

Research that has taken account of students' views suggests that courses need to be as relevant as possible to students' future courses.

Two basic means of achieving relevance suggest themselves:

1. the close involvement of subject specialists in the planning and/or delivery of the programme and/or the assessment of students;
2. the acquisition by EAP tutors of sufficient subject-specific knowledge and understanding to be able to make informed decisions about topics, texts and tasks.

These are not mutually exclusive, of course.

"… if the bridging programme focuses exclusively on academic language, as the short duration of most pre-sessionals makes necessary, then students may be justified in claiming that they are not being taught the idiomatic English to help them integrate better."

One concern for EAP practitioners is the relationship between their department and the wider academic body, since they sometimes feel detached from, or ignorant of, the courses for which they are attempting to prepare students. Subject specialists can be involved in a number of ways. For instance, they may do some teaching or team-teaching, or co-mark written work. More peripherally, they may provide reading lists and examples of texts or offer advice to EAP tutors as needed. They may also agree to their UG lectures being recorded. There are many examples of profitable co-operation between subject specialists and EAP tutors (Etherington, 2007) which enable the latter to better prepare their students for the particular language demands of their course, but this level of co-operation cannot always be assumed. In some cases the lecturers may feel that teaching languages is not their responsibility (as in Love and Arkoudis's (2006) Australian study of teachers' attitudes to Asian students in Years 11 and 12) or simply be too busy, or have other concerns (Braine, 2001). Moreover, pre-sessional programmes may take place at a time – during the summer vacation, for instance – when subject specialists are not available; and the latter also have many other demands on their time or simply be unwilling to cooperate for other reasons. It follows that the closer involvement of subject specialists should not rest on informal arrangements but be part of a negotiated institutional strategy.

Given the wide variation in academic tasks required of students on different degree courses there are clear benefits for both teachers and students in having distinct courses or pathways for, e.g. students of agriculture, engineering and business. Evidently, foundation-type courses can avoid these difficulties, in that students generally form subject-specific groups for part of their timetable, which also allows for more focused language work, e.g. the specialised grammar and lexis of engineering journal articles (Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001b). In many pre-sessional courses, however, the practical difficulties of organising such groups, especially the need for economically viable group sizes, mean that homogeneous grouping is not possible. In this case the groups will be mixed and topics, texts and focus of language study inevitably more 'general academic'.

In such situations, tensions can arise, especially in Anglophone countries, where students also need the language for social purposes. There is a clear preference among students (Green, 2000; Pilcher, 2006) to be taught subject-specific language, and a feeling that 'general academic' courses are of less value. However, if the bridging programme focuses exclusively on academic language, as the short duration of most pre-sessionals makes necessary, then students may be justified in claiming that they are not being taught the idiomatic English to help them integrate better.

4.2.2 The language component

Very few teachers of EAP are trained professionals in the specialised fields of their students. The history of EAP nevertheless provides ample evidence of the professionalism of such teachers in attempting to acquire an understanding of the kinds of texts students need to deal with and produce (see, e.g. Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001: 14-16; Swales, 2001; Paltridge, 2001; and Jordan, 2002, on developments from register analysis to genre analysis and beyond).

Vocabulary, reading and writing

Teaching vocabulary is often linked in EAP course design with either reading or writing. The need for students to acquire an adequate academic vocabulary and the difficulties of achieving this are thoroughly discussed by Coxhead and Nation (2001). They make the important distinction between subject-specific, or technical vocabulary, and academic vocabulary, while emphasising that both are essential. Cobb and Horst (2001), in *Reading Academic English: Carrying learners across the lexical threshold*, discuss the considerable difficulties of achieving an adequate working vocabulary, and suggest an approach which reduces the time taken to do this.

A common experience for EAP tutors is to find the importance of reading downplayed by students, who fail to grasp the sheer quantity of reading that their future courses will demand (Atherton, 2006). A parallel approach is to teach macro and micro reading skills such as skimming and scanning and text evaluation (Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001c), but clearly these cannot be properly exercised unless a high proportion of the vocabulary is understood.

Writing has been the subject of many studies. For example, Badger and White (2000) discuss the three main approaches to teaching this skill, namely product, process and genre. They see the *product* approach as being mainly concerned with language and *process* as focusing on the stages of writing, such as note-making, planning and drafting, while *genre* emphasises the type of future written work that will be required of the student. Each of these in isolation is seen as having weaknesses, and so their suggestion is to use a multi-strand approach, with the focus on genre and process.

Etherington (2007) collected the views of academic staff on the qualities they looked for in students' written work. They said they valued logical argument, clarity and grammatical and lexical accuracy, and were concerned by issues of plagiarism. In the light of this, the EAP staff revised their assessment materials for their academic writing course to put more emphasis on intertextuality, i.e. requiring students to use two or more sources. This was felt to reflect more accurately the writing they would be required to do on their future courses. A group of students were then followed into their academic courses and asked about the priorities for their writing at the end of the first semester. The results showed a more sophisticated understanding of the nature of university writing, which had come to coincide with the views of their teachers. This study raises the question of how adequately a pre-sessional course can prepare students for the specific courses they will be following, how 'to move beyond a view of writing for linguistic practice' (p.7). See also *Learner assessment*, following.

Martala (2006) studied the writing performance of a small group of female Chinese students on the pre-sessional course at the University of Hertfordshire, UK that was based on the proposals of Badger and White. She found that the course prepared them effectively for their studies, but notes that:

> there was a strong correlation between the students' attitude to study and improvements in their writing skills. Students seemed to make slower progress when they did not respond to feedback, when they did not ask questions in class and when they could not identify their own problem areas.
>
> (Martala 2006: 51-52)

In a study by Pilcher (2006) at Heriot-Watt University, Scotland, mainland Chinese students were interviewed about their progress during the process of writing dissertations, without direct reference to any EAP course they had taken. Nevertheless, many did refer to their EAP experience:

> Overall these comments indicate that these participants found the EAP courses they had done useful although one participant commented on the difference in scale of what they were now doing. Also corroborating this is how little use two of the participants said they got out of English for General Purposes.
>
> (Pilcher 2006: 60)

Speaking and listening

Although 'lecture listening' and note-making have traditionally been seen as important skills for UG students, it is perhaps important that listening should not be seen as a skill in isolation. A large-scale American study (Ferris and Tagg, 1996) involving a survey of 900 professors at four different types of institution, found that 'U.S. instructors' lecturing styles are becoming less formal and more interactive and that this trend places new expectations upon the students' (p.31).

Another American study, by Kim (2006), examined the situation of East Asian students (the majority group of international students in

"Although 'lecture listening' and note-making have traditionally been seen as important skills for UG students, it is perhaps important that listening should not be seen as a skill in isolation"

the US) at a major university. Such students are generally felt to be reticent in oral situations and, when asked, they rated the most demanding academic situations to be whole class discussions and asking questions. The key skills they felt they needed were giving presentations and listening comprehension. Kim considered that the implications for EAP teaching were to highlight the importance of simulating large group discussion and associated micro skills (such as interrupting), and also to make students aware of the key, and increasing, role such activities play in US academic life. Kim also argued that simulations should be based on academic materials rather than everyday topics.

These findings are supported by an Australian study at Curtin University, *Identifying the listening and speaking needs of international students* (Dooey, 2006). This notes the findings of previous researchers that general listening skills play an important role in academic life by facilitating participation in informal discussion as well as in seminars and lectures. These results were replicated by Dooey, who found that both students and their lecturers were in agreement on this; she concludes that the ability to play a confident role in discussion is dependent on good listening skills. She also recommends that subject lecturers should bear the difficulties of international students in mind when using idiomatic or colloquial language.

The particular theme of student participation in group discussion is addressed by Jones (1999) from a cross-cultural perspective. He considers that the commonly-observed reticence of NNS students in group discussion has its origin in more than linguistic disadvantage, but may be rooted in their cultural heritage, as well as stemming from an ignorance of the rules of conversation in English. In addition, students may well feel that they have come to an overseas university to take a degree, not to learn another culture, and so be resistant to attempts to help them to bridge the cultural divide. Reasons for reticence are believed to be based on the Asian (as a broad generalisation) pattern in which the teacher is the authority whose learning should be respected by the class (with a lack of discussion). There is evidence that in some Asian cultures silence is a positive virtue. In the face of this, Jones suggests that an EAP course should both explain the value of discussion, and provide students with the skills to take part. He says that teachers should insist on giving all students in a group an equal chance to participate, and proposes a range of exercises to provide students with strategies to enhance their participation.

Speaking and listening are combined in an 'integrated skills cycle' described by Wyllie (1997). Based on experience at Sussex University, UK, the cycle has four phases:

1. pre-lecture preparation (30 mins): students brainstorm, predict lecture content and prepare questions for the lecturer
2. lecture (45 mins + 15 mins for questions): students take notes, then ask questions
3. post-lecture review (30 mins): review of lecture content and students' notes. Tutors provide any necessary clarification, and hand out related readings as preparation for phase 4 (seminar).
4. student-led seminar (90 mins): students read the assigned texts in advance. A preparatory teacher-led focus on content and skills (30 mins) is followed by intensive discussion, and a brief feedback session.

This form of supported experience, which could be extended by the provision in a self-access centre of an audio-recording of the lecture and language awareness exercises, would seem to have much to recommend it.

4.2.3 Academic culture

There is some evidence (briefly reviewed in Ryan and Hellmundt, 2003) that though international students in an Anglophone country are likely to experience certain predictable difficulties with language in the first year of UG study, lack of socio-cultural knowledge and an inability to handle the discourse norms of the discipline continue to pose problems. This strengthens the argument

There is considerable agreement among researchers in Anglophone countries, for example, that students need to be made aware of such practices as asking critical questions and the need to take responsibility for their own learning.

for the inclusion in bridging programmes of appropriate forms of academic as well as socio-cultural awareness raising.

There is considerable agreement among researchers in Anglophone countries, for example, that students need to be made aware of such practices as asking critical questions and the need to take responsibility for their own learning (Wilhelm, 1997; Jones, 1999; Catterick, 2004; Richards, 2004). Incorporating awareness-raising and related practical activities into a bridging programme, in addition to the purely academic demands of the programme, represents a major challenge for some students. Yet there is strong evidence to suggest that students who fail to adapt at this stage will struggle on their degree course (Pilcher, 2006). Closely related to this is the issue of how best to make students aware of the demands of their future courses, for instance of the need to read widely and critically. Most students arriving at an English-medium university feel that they can read adequately, and have no idea of the volume of reading required by most courses in an academic register or how to approach this selectively. Cadman (1997), writing on *Thesis writing for international students, A question of identity?*, illustrates the cultural gap clearly when she describes an interview with a Chinese student:

> She lowered her voice to 'confess' that she had never heard of referencing another scholar's work or commenting on it, before she found herself in this class. This student was able to make a comparison between this experience and an earlier one in China in which she had completely failed to understand a reading passage in English because it was about a dishwasher and she had never seen or imagined one.
>
> (Cadman 1997: 7)

No doubt because of the importance of the East Asian market (e.g. China, Japan and Korea) to universities in the major English-speaking countries, a number of studies have focused on the cultural gap between Asian and Western attitudes to study. Catterick (2004) contrasts the beliefs about language learning of Chinese students at Dundee University, Scotland with those of the teaching staff. Perhaps unsurprisingly, he concludes that the two groups appear to have significantly different beliefs: the students, for example, appear to dislike being specifically praised in the classroom. A similar study by Cotton (2004), *Mismatched expectations: pedagogical approaches*, was carried out with a group of South East Asian students. Although she found that some of the students had beliefs about learning that 'seemed to accord with the beliefs expected in 'collective' societies…' (p.97), she insists that there was considerable variation in beliefs among the cohort, and concludes that: 'no rigid assumptions can be made about the beliefs students hold…' (p.98). Her recommendation that each new group should be surveyed to find out about their beliefs so that materials can be adjusted accordingly seems, however, a little impractical.

In Pilcher's study (2006), plagiarism was seen as a major issue for many of the students interviewed, and their EAP courses were felt to have been helpful in this area. The students also commented frequently on the difference between academic practice in the UK and China, with far less direction being exerted by their UK teachers, who were also sometimes felt to be difficult to contact.

One factor which emerges from several studies is the reluctance of some, especially young, students in Anglophone countries to assume a new academic 'identity', coupled with a tendency to stay within their own language group. The issue of students' 'identity' is explored more fully by Demirkan-Jones (2006) in a case study of undergraduate students, the majority of whom were East Asian, on a nine-month bridging programme at Essex University. Although the students were aware of the importance of improving their English for their future studies, it was observed that they spent most of their time using L1: 'Only 12% of Chinese students said they always use L2 in the classroom compared with 55% for non-Chinese speaking students' (p.4). In trying to answer the question of why these students were so reluctant to use

'While Western notions of the individual allow, and indeed value, individual self-expression leading inevitably to conflict and competition, Asian values tend towards empathy and conformity…' (Richards, 2004)

the opportunities presented to them, the study argues that the desire to maintain their membership of a group (through using L1) over-rode other considerations. This obviously limits the extent to which they practise English outside the classroom, and effectively leads to a situation where they remain isolated from the wider student body throughout their university career (Atherton, 2006). The importance of establishing good peer group relationships, especially with the trend towards the use of group projects in many subjects, cannot be over-emphasised, so that tackling this issue would seem a priority in those cases where it is evident.

A more robust approach to a similar problem is described by Wilhelm (1997) in *Language – not the only barrier*. This describes a large-scale Malaysian-based programme to prepare students for study in universities in America. The EAP programme was restructured to take account of American academic approaches, by expecting students to become self-directed rather than depending on their teachers for continuous instruction. This took as its starting point the students' previous experience of school with its textbook and exam formula, and tried to replace it with something approximating to their likely future situation:

> Group work and investigative projects encouraged students to take control of both product and process. Teachers were asked to explain that, in the American university context, professors offer knowledge, facilitate learning… [The] Professor is not typically viewed as being primarily responsible for the learner's success or failure in the course.
>
> (Wilhelm 1997: 7)

Wilhelm argues that the project's success can be judged by the positive reaction from the university teachers to the performance of these students when compared to that of previous cohorts. This study underlines the wide range of cultural factors, down to the simple issue of whether students arrive in class punctually (an indicator of a positive approach to learning), that can affect their future academic careers. A UK perspective on the promotion of learner autonomy in the context of a pre-sessional course can be found in Lynch (2001).

A related aspect of academic culture is the issue of critical thinking, which is widely considered as an essential feature of Western academic life. Richards (2004) looks at this area and remarks: 'While Western notions of the individual allow, and indeed value, individual self-expression leading inevitably to conflict and competition, Asian values tend towards empathy and conformity…' (p.55). She argues that critical thinking needs to be taught overtly as part of the EAP syllabus: 'to present and incorporate it into the English language part of the course, where it is woven into the typical activities and assignments…' (p.57). In conclusion, she claims that such a strategy can be successful due to Asian students' adaptability and belief in the value of effort.

Students can, however, react negatively to what they see as a deficit view of education. Two independent surveys of students in international students in Australian universities reported in Ryan and Hellmundt (2003) yielded very similar findings: that though students had difficulty coping with the speed and format of lectures and the use by lecturers of 'unfamiliar concepts, expressions and anecdotes', their major complaint concerned the predominantly 'ethnocentric perspectives and materials' (p.4). This argues for the need on the part of subject lecturers not only to broaden the range of illustrative materials but also to give some thought to the ways in which the knowledge and experience of international students can be used to enrich the experience of a course.

4.3 Learner assessment

One particularly sensitive issue for all bridging programmes revolves around end-of-course assessment. Given that many university departments rely on the judgement of the EAP staff to assess the ability of students to cope with the demands of their future courses, this is clearly a considerable responsibility. There is also the uncomfortable fact that many students have invested heavily in their bridging programmes, and literally cannot afford to

fail, and that some university departments are desperate to accept international students to maintain their student numbers.

Although the assessment of speaking and writing can never be wholly objective, it is nevertheless not difficult to set tasks which resemble those used in IELTS exams, and the use of IELTS descriptors (see Appendix 3) when assessing performance, especially when an effort is made to standardise assessment, should ensure a reasonable degree of fit between an IELTS score and that awarded on a bridging programme. The assessment of listening and reading skills is, perhaps paradoxically, more difficult. In this case, the reliability of scoring can be guaranteed by preparing an agreed answer key; the problem lies in selecting texts and devising questions that are at the same level as those in an IELTS examination.

The difficulties of devising an accurate and reliable assessment of student performance on pre-sessional EAP courses is discussed by Banerjee and Wall (2006). They contrast the use of external tests such as IELTS with in-house evaluation and conclude: 'external EAP tests such as IELTS and TOEFL… while suitable as a pre-entry measure, are insufficiently representative of the construct of EAP (particularly EAP writing) to be used as an exit measure for pre-sessional courses' (p.54). As an alternative, they propose and describe a can-do checklist, which gives both students and academic staff a breakdown of student capability.

The question of whether assessment on bridging programmes should attempt to replicate (in this case) IELTS or seek to mirror the kinds of writing task and assessment criteria that will be used on students' UG courses is also raised, though with a rather different focus, in an Australian study by Moore and Morton (2005). The authors looked at the types of writing tasks encountered by undergraduates and compared them with the writing sections of IELTS. They highlight the diversity of writing tasks commonly found, but suggest:

> If an EAP teacher is looking for a written genre to make central to their program, they could do no harm in opting for the common and (sic) garden university essay – that is, one written on the basis of a range of readings, and concerned possibly with a content of a more abstract, metaphenomenal nature.
>
> (Moore and Morton 2005: 63)

They go on to argue that the writing required to pass IELTS is of a different character: '[it] may have more in common with certain public forms of written discourse than with those of the academy' (p.64).

The assessment of written work was also the subject of a study by Montgomery and Pearsall (1999) at Essex University, UK. They compared the marking of pre-sessional written projects in three subject areas by EAP tutors and subject teachers. Inevitably there were differences; not only were the EAP tutors more positive generally, but they appeared to value different things to the subject teachers. These latter, however, varied from one subject area to another in the criteria they applied, which illustrates the difficulty of the task facing EAP tutors and, as Montgomery and Pearsall point out, raises the question of whether EAP tutors should evaluate subject content at all.

4.4 Programme evaluation: evaluating the effectiveness of bridging programmes

Initially, EAP courses were felt to be clearly beneficial, since they provided training in skills that students obviously needed. Positive anecdotal evidence was also provided by students reporting successful degree course completion. There is now greater awareness of the complexity of the issues involved in evaluating the effectiveness of bridging programmes. As Harris and Thorp (1999) argue, 'EAP cannot be seen as a set of technical skills in isolation, but rather is a melange of language, culture and affect' (p.8). Moreover, students exiting from many programmes go on to courses in a variety of institutions, and even when a bridging programme provides direct access

"There is now greater awareness of the complexity of the issues involved in evaluating the effectiveness of bridging programmes. As Harris and Thorp (1999) argue, 'EAP cannot be seen as a set of technical skills in isolation, but rather is a melange of language, culture and affect'"

to a specific institution, the large number of variables present are likely to confound any hope of establishing simple cause and effect relationships. Despite recognising that differences in student performance could be due to '… being better or worse at English despite IELTS scores, or good/poor at their subject which affected their final result…' (Saunders, 2006:111), Saunders and a colleague had planned a follow-up study of students from PS and Foundation Programmes at Royal Holloway College, University of London when they progressed to a Masters course in Management. However, the University refused to release the required data on student performance, and Saunders and her colleague were ultimately obliged to conclude that there would be too many variables, 'ranging from personal reasons to poor/inspiring teaching or to overly easy/difficult examination structures' (pp 110-111), to make the research valid.

The consequence, as Evans and Green (2007: 5) observe, is that:

> Few researchers have attempted to examine the efficiency of EAP courses in terms of measurable proficiency gains (as opposed to affective gains) … investigating the surrender value of short courses covering a range of language and study skills are (sic) highly problematic and, if undertaken, is unlikely to be to the course provider's advantage.

Even measurement of what Evans and Green term 'affective gains' is unreliable. Just to take a simple example, two students on the same course may have different teachers during the course, and thus finish with quite opposite feelings of satisfaction towards the quality of teaching. Measuring affective changes over time – in attitude, say, or confidence – poses obvious problems. The reference to 'short' courses in the above quotation may, however, be a concession that longer courses should make a difference, and it is perhaps this assumption that has led to some attempts to assess the effects of extended bridging programmes.

Millar (2002) suggests three methodological approaches to such studies:

1. correlating average performance of individuals on the foundation programme (i.e. their overall exit score) with their average performance on the degree programme;
2. compiling statistics on withdrawals;
3. compiling statistics on length of time taken to complete.

In his own study of 243 students who over the 7-year period 1995-2001 had progressed from a foundation programme at Oxford Brookes University, UK into UG degrees at the same university, Millar made use of all three methods. He found that 11 students had failed outright, and 32 had failed for non-completion within the stipulated time or had been suspended (these are not compared with figures for international students who had not done the foundation programme or home students). A correlation of final performance on the foundation programme and final performance on the degree for 88 students who graduated between 1998 and 2001 was 'quite high' at 0.62. However, for students who had completed the foundation programme in 2000 and 2001 and were still studying at Oxford Brookes, correlations are described as 'weak' (0.4) or 'very weak' (0.23). Millar offers a number of possible explanations, some of which were based on conversations with students or have support in the literature. These are: students found Year 1 easier than they had been led to believe and 'slackened off'; they were content to get a degree and were unconcerned about the class of degree; course content on the foundation programme was narrower and therefore unrepresentative of that on the degree; performance was affected by the larger class size on the degree programme. He concludes that further qualitative research is desirable.

Atherton (2006) reports on a tracking study of the 125 students who attended the four-, eight- or twelve-week pre-sessional course in 2005 at Kingston University (KU), UK into the start of their university careers. All arrivals were given a KU test, which in many cases failed

"… success in academic study is due to more than successful completion of a bridging programme. … Although no amount of enthusiasm may be able to compensate for a very weak level of English proficiency, in-sessional support can help the marginal."

to match their IELTS or TOEFL score; this was especially true of Chinese, Korean and Russian students. Altogether, nearly a third of the students were felt to be weaker than their official scores indicated.

Despite this, most students worked hard to pass the course, only five failing, but it was felt that nearly half the group were only marginally acceptable. Overall, the pre-sessional was considered by the participants to have been successful, and from the university's perspective it succeeded in its aim of enabling the great majority to enter their degree courses. Follow-up surveys, however, became more problematic, as the student response rate fell sharply. However, it seems that students who had attended the pre-sessional course, when compared with those who had not, felt more confident and comfortable at the start of their studies, and also had the advantage of having formed friendship groups.

When asked what should have had greater emphasis on the pre-sessional course, planning and writing essays and reading skills in general were frequently mentioned, subjects which Atherton claims were often resisted during the actual course. Many students later noted that their English had actually deteriorated since taking the intensive course, and claimed to have no time for further language studies. It seemed that many spent their time in an L1 language community (e.g. of Korean students) and had little to do with their English classmates. There was a clear contrast between the very supportive climate of the pre-sessional course and the harsher reality of ordinary academic life, and one remedy adopted by KU was to lengthen future pre-sessional courses (Atherton, 2006). Some of the concerns highlighted by Atherton have been echoed by other researchers.

A similar, though rather more focused study was undertaken by Ridley (2006) at Sheffield Hallam University (SHU). Initially prompted by lecturers' concerns about the language proficiency of some international students, she followed the progress of 48 PG students who attended the 2000 pre-sessional course, attempting to find a relationship between pre-sessional exit test results and subsequent course completion. Unlike Atherton's broader approach, Ridley simply looked at the length of time needed to complete the Masters degree, the third of the methods suggested by Millar (2002). The exit test had a 'pass' mark of 60%, but only just over half the cohort achieved it. Despite this, 38 of the cohort were admitted to degree courses. The findings in relation to the primary research question were that the weakest students were unable to finish their degrees on time but that the results were not so clear cut for the median group who had scores just above and below 60: '… students with exit test scores in the high 50s are no more likely to fall by the wayside or not complete in the expected time than students with scores in the low 60s…' (Ridley, 2006: 37). In addition, Ridley claims that the ability of some of the weaker students to succeed was due both to the university's continuing support and the strategies they had learnt on the pre-sessional course. The SHU study seems to reinforce a widely held view that success in academic study is due to more than successful completion of a bridging programme. Maturity, emotional stability, financial security and previous experience of living abroad have all been suggested as potent factors, to which should be added ability in and enthusiasm for the student's own subject. Although no amount of enthusiasm may be able to compensate for a very weak level of English proficiency, in-sessional support can help the marginal.

The extent to which non-linguistic factors can affect academic performance is also discussed by Green (2000) in her study *Life after the pre-sessional course: How students fare in their departments*. Conducted at Reading University, this followed a group of PG students from pre-sessional assessment to completion of their Masters course. As only 5% failed to gain a degree, she concludes that the initial assessment exercise was broadly accurate, but highlights the importance of a rigorous standardisation procedure for the EAP staff involved in testing. Furthermore:

> academic tutors felt that non-linguistic factors helped their students' academic performance, that linguistic factors

> hindered, and both played an important part in their academic performance. Students agreed to some extent though they prioritised knowledge of their academic subject over the importance of linguistic factors.
>
> (Green 2000: 144)

In some contexts, UG students do compulsory English language courses alongside their major. Though these are, strictly speaking, in-sessional programmes and therefore outside the scope of this review, Evans and Green's (2007) study of nearly 5000 Cantonese-speaking students at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University following compulsory EAP courses is of interest because of its scale and its focus on the perceived value of specific types of academic task. Their key finding was that giving presentations and writing reports and projects were rated as most important by both students and their teachers. Writing was seen as the most critical skill since most assessments were based on written assignments. In both reading and writing, technical vocabulary caused the most serious problems for students, yet it was found that students rarely used dictionaries. Speaking in seminar discussions and presenting were felt to be major concerns, but academic listening was not seen as such a problem.

Evans and Green conclude that EAP courses for these students should give priority to teaching vocabulary and developing learner autonomy: 'both EAP programme designers and front line practitioners will need to encourage strategies that foster greater independence, especially in the area of understanding key vocabulary' (Evans and Green, 2007:14). The situation of EAP in Hong Kong is obviously different from that in fully English-speaking environments, and clearly all such findings must be considered in the light of students' particular circumstances; however, their conclusions echo those in the wider literature.

4.5 Conclusions

4.5.1 Research strands and themes

This brief review has drawn on examples of research carried out in the UK, USA, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Ghana in relation to bridging programmes as defined in section 1 (i.e. foundation programmes and pre-sessional courses) and variations on this, school-based courses and compulsory 'service' EAP courses for UG students. The major emphasis is on pre-sessional courses rather than the EAP component of foundation programmes. The review contains no references to published research outside the Anglophone countries and former British colonial territories. This may reflect the limitations of our search methods or the actual paucity of such work, but it raises the broader question of how applicable the research reported here is to other contexts. We return to this point in section 5.

As EAP has matured and become more self-reflective various strands of research have become apparent. Clearly, many of the studies have been carried out by teachers involved in the day-to-day administration and delivery of bridging programmes, and their research priorities reflect their everyday experiences. If, for example, they have a class that is reluctant to speak, that is likely to become the focus for their research interest. Recent patterns of research also reflect the realities of the academic marketplace, in particular the large numbers of Chinese students participating in English-medium courses outside China. Attempts have been made to assess the effectiveness of particular bridging courses, though these tend to be rather broad-brush in character. Some attention has been paid to evaluating the accuracy of assessment at the exit point of these courses, which is the level of university entry. Other studies have focused on particular academic needs such as writing and oral communication.

A number of recurrent themes emerge, one being the difficulty faced by EAP teachers who are preparing students for a wide variety of courses in a range of institutions. With

"A number of recurrent themes emerge, one being the difficulty faced by EAP teachers who are preparing students for a wide variety of courses in a range of institutions. With only a vague idea of the language demands of, say, an engineering degree course in Birmingham or a law course at UEA, how can a bridging programme teacher hope to plan a successful course for students heading for these and other challenges?"

only a vague idea of the language demands of, say, an engineering degree course in Birmingham or a law course at UEA, how can a bridging programme teacher hope to plan a successful course for students heading for these and other challenges? There is substantial research to indicate that students respond best to subject-specific teaching materials (e.g. Pilcher, 2006), and yet the reality of many bridging programmes with their mixture of undergraduates and postgraduates from a variety of disciplines is that a 'general academic' vocabulary must be used.

There is also strong evidence that academic habits are culturally deep-rooted, and cannot be effectively changed by a short EAP course. Although many may enter an English-medium university with the intention of improving their English fluency and joining an international community of students, some – especially younger and more immature students – find that the reality is mainly association with compatriots and their progress in English is limited as a result. Given the importance of social networks in student life, this is clearly a vital issue but one that is hard for EAP teachers to influence.

There appears to be general agreement that in themselves bridging programmes constitute a form of effective practice, with longer programmes, which offer not only time for development but also wider content coverage, likely to be more beneficial than shorter programmes. In the conclusion to this section, we highlight particular features of programmes that seem likely to contribute to their overall effectiveness.

4.5.2 Effective frameworks

What foundation programmes and pre-sessional courses have in common is a focus on EAP; one point on which they frequently differ is their duration. As we have seen, however, there is now a trend in some UK universities to treat pre-sessional courses not as a totally separate form of provision from the GE courses taught in the earlier part of the year but as a development out of these: i.e. the GE courses become a form of preparation for pre-sessionals. In the interests of overall coherence, this has a predictable washback effect on syllabus-design and materials selection; it also means that course duration is no longer a key difference between pre-sessionals and foundation courses. This is apparent in the following quotation: 'Most pre-sessional EAP courses are now four, eight or 12 weeks; longer ones are often 6-12 months and may be called foundation courses' (Jordan, 2002: 73).

Effective frameworks seem to address the need for the following:

1. individualisation: flexible pathways can take account of different entry levels and subject-specific needs, but careful coordination and individual guidance are essential; on a more limited level, individual needs can be catered for through guided self-study, ideally in a well-equipped self-access centre, and individual projects
2. relevance: the involvement of subject specialists lends credibility and the personal contact can be reassuring; in 'general academic' classes, consideration needs to be given to the perceived relevance of text and task; clarity is necessary as to the intended function of course components (e.g. remedial vs foundational; study skills)
3. independent study: should be encouraged and facilitated

4.5.3 Components

Considerable expertise is now available concerning subject-related needs (language and skills) and computer-based applications render more detailed analyses possible. Discussions continue, however, about the extent of a common core of academic discourse and whether this should be taught first, alongside or subsumed within the teaching of subject-specific language.

What seems in less doubt is that there is a need to make students aware of the characteristics of the academic culture that they are about to enter, and equip them as

far as possible with the skills they will need to cope with this. This has, however, been construed as the imposition of a culturally-specific model of education (see, e.g. the discussion in Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001: 21-22), and this debate will no doubt continue.

4.5.4 Broader issues

Learner assessment is, as we have seen, problematic for a number of reasons. There is also an issue in some contexts concerning the cross-institutional recognition of bridging programmes, and implicitly therefore the need for an 'industry standard'. We are, however, mindful that Read and Hirsh's (2005) carefully argued call for a standards framework in New Zealand has thus far been ignored (Angela Joe, personal communication).

One general implication of the foregoing is that EAP teachers require a level of formal training beyond that of the GE teacher. This has been recognised, and a small number of courses are now available.

5. Recommendations for further research

"There is considerable belief… that there are considerable commonalities between EAP programmes at one level and Foundation Studies programmes at another level"

The issues identified in previous sections imply the need for further research in a number of areas. Specific suggestions are made below in the form of questions grouped for convenience under a number of headings. No prioritisation has been attempted since circumstances and constraints will vary across institutions. Moreover, those in a position to commission or carry out such research will no doubt have their own views on an appropriate agenda and prioritisations within this.

Some of the suggestions call for cross-institutional survey research and cooperation. Writing in the context of New Zealand, Read and Hirsh (2005) note:

'There is considerable belief… that there are considerable commonalities between EAP programmes at one level and Foundation Studies programmes at another level', but acknowledge that there, as elsewhere, 'there is… some concern that competition between institutions for students may be an obstacle to effective cooperation, while a few institutions are resistant to sharing their intellectual property' (p.35). Though these concerns need to be taken into account, they do not necessarily rule out the possibility of joint research and development activity from which all benefit.

5.1 Suggested research focuses

- **English in schools**

The transition to tertiary-level study through the medium of English will clearly be smoother if a foundation is laid while students are still at school. How far do state schools attempt to prepare students for tertiary education through the medium of English? Where this is an aim, what approach is used to realise it (e.g. content and integrated language instruction – CLIL; see, e.g., Scholey, 2008 for a wide-ranging review) and what factors constrain its realisation?

- **Course design, methodology, materials**

There is an increasing tendency for institutions to admit students with relatively low English language proficiency levels (e.g. IELTS 4.0 or lower) to bridging programmes. What are the implications of this for, e.g. course length and intensity, for the sequencing of course components, and for materials selection?

What are the common-core features of programmes with similar objectives for students of a similar level?

Where classes are non-homogeneous, to what extent, and in what ways, do courses take account of differences between students (e.g. differences in language proficiency or language profile, educational level, study skills, intended subject specialisation)?

Where courses provide for large numbers of students of the same nationality, what account is taken of their common needs (e.g. social and academic acculturation)?

There is a large body of research on autonomous learning and independent thinking, some of which deals with readiness for learning (e.g. Cotterall, 1995). In the context of bridging programmes, what approaches have been found to be helpful in developing a capacity for autonomous learning and critical thinking?

When courses are 'general EAP', what topics form the focus of practice in reading, writing, etc?

Which published materials are being used for what types of students and student levels? What are teachers' and students' views of the value of these?

How are published materials used (exploitation, modification, supplementation)?

To what extent are students exposed to authentic (i.e. first-year UG) reading and listening (written texts, recorded or live texts)?

How is their understanding of such texts facilitated?

How far do programmes in non-Anglophone countries teach not only ways of understanding culturally specific academic conventions but also the production of these? How successful is this in contexts far removed from Anglophone countries?

What online resources (including web-based resources) are available for self-access learning? How are students prepared for use of these? To what extent do they use them, how do they evaluate them, and what evidence is there of their effectiveness? What problems have institutions found in establishing, resourcing and maintaining self-access centres?

- **Learner assessment**

Further research is needed to address the following questions:

What types of exit tests are taken before students are allowed to enter UG programmes?

What steps are taken to ensure the reliability of these tests?

What steps are taken to ensure standardisation of marking, especially during summer pre-sessionals when temporary teaching staff are involved?

How helpful are the test results for other interested parties, i.e. subject tutors and students?

What is the minimum level of English, defined in terms of, e.g. IELTS/TOEFL or bridging programme exit scores, necessary for a student to cope comfortably with the linguistic demands of a UG course in X at institution Y?

5.2 Research methods and researchers

It will be clear from Section 4 that much research has been carried out, research which has informed current practice and can guide future practice. However, it will be equally clear from the research agenda above that more research of different kinds is needed: descriptive research which can be collated to form a broader and deeper picture of the 'state of the art' in relation to the ways in which bridging programmes are organised, including the principles on which decisions concerning content and materials are made; evaluative research, which reports on experimentation, problems and solutions; and illuminative research, most likely qualitative in nature, which explores what happens in classrooms and how groups and individuals feel about their learning and teaching experiences.

There also appears to be a need for more broadly based research. Much of the research reported in Section 4 has been conducted in Anglophone countries. One of the general issues is the extent to which this is equally applicable to students who are merely studying through the medium of English in the bridging programme classroom and switching back into their own culture and language when they are outside the classroom. Contexts outside the major English-speaking countries are clearly under-represented, and this is no doubt a reflection of the way the roles of EAP teachers are typically defined (i.e. teacher vs researcher rather than teacher *and* researcher). The reality, of course, is that many EAP teachers do carry out research, though they may not think of it in this light. Unreported research can be of value to students, to institutions and to the teacher-researchers involved, but the dissemination of such research, in workshops, conferences and published papers, offers a different form of professional development opportunity that can also contribute to the wider professional community. It is important that this is recognised, encouraged and supported.

6. Conclusions

"Bridging programmes play a key role in enabling students who are not native speakers of English to access and benefit from English-medium instruction."

Bridging programmes play a key role in enabling students who are not native speakers of English to access and benefit from English-medium instruction. Even when the purpose of such programmes may be perceived as primarily linguistic (as in pre-sessional programmes), the accompanying focus on study skills and the insights gained into the requirements of tertiary-level study mean that the benefits are not narrowly linguistic. Where students find themselves in an alien culture, the bridging programme also provides a safe and supportive environment during which the necessary adjustments can take place and social networks become established. However, it is not just the individual student who gains. Everyone gains. The host institution has an income stream and – where students form part of an international community – is culturally enriched by those whom it welcomes, benefits that extend to staff and other students. Given the economic strength of English, as noted in the introduction to this report, non-Anglophone countries also gain from having graduates who are capable of communicating in English.

The vital importance of the role played by English in national development and international cooperation cannot be underestimated. The following extracts are taken from a passionately worded letter from Miles Holloway, Director of the John Povey Centre for English Studies, University of South Africa:

> … Without increased levels of language competence, educational and economic development will remain illusory and elusive….
>
> … In Africa and, I suspect, in Asia and Latin America, distinctions between ESP, ESOL, EAP and several other acronyms are meaningless and pointless. Language – and in particular – English is an essential asset necessary for survival. … English language is … a social responsibility, a humanitarian impulse, a moral obligation…, a matter of conscience….
>
> … Redress [for colonial neglect] must go beyond business disguised as altruism and charitable handouts. It must look at new partnerships, the active sharing of knowledge and expertise, and co-operative structures across continents, languages and cultures. Help us to help ourselves….
>
> (attachment to Newsletter, IATEFL ESP Special Interest Group, May 2005)

The full text can be found at: http://espsig.iatefl.org/resources/SIG_report.doc

In 2007 the newsletter in which the above letter was published became a journal in its own right, *Professional and Academic English*. It is, of course, a sign of progress that these and other forums for the sharing of knowledge and expertise exist. However, it is important that – in keeping with the theme of the letter – this sharing is not seen as a one-way process. Practitioners working in English-medium contexts outside the Anglophone countries have knowledge and expertise as well as needs. It is vital that these are also shared, and that research continues on a broader front.

References

Afful, J. (2007) Academic literacy and communicative skills in the Ghanaian university: a proposal. Nebula 4.3. Available at **http://www.nobelworld.biz/images/Afful.pdf Accessed 23.6.08**

Atherton, B. (2006) Balancing needs: How successful can a Pre-Sessional course be? In A. Gillett and L. Wray (Eds.) *Assessing the Effectiveness of EAP Programmes*. London: BALEAP

Banerjee, J. and Wall, D. (2006) Assessing and reporting performances on pre-sessional EAP courses: Developing a final assessment checklist and investigating its validity. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 5, 50-69

Bayliss, A. and Ingram, D. (2006) IELTS as a predictor of academic language performance. Australian International Education Conference. Available at **http://www.idp.com/aiec**

Bellingham, L. (1995) Navigating choppy seas: IELTS as a support for success in higher education. *TESOLANZ Journal* 3: 21-28

Bool, H. & Luford, P. (Eds) (1999) *Academic Standards and Expectations*. Nottingham: Nottingham University Press

Braine, G. (2001) When professors don't co-operate: a critical perspective on EAP research. *English for Specific Purposes*, 20, 293-303

Cadman, K. (1997) Thesis Writing for International Students: A Question of Identity? *English for Specific Purposes*, 16, 1, 3-14

Cameron, B. & Meade, P. (2002) Supporting the transition to university of international students: Issues and challenges. **http://www.otago.ac.nz/quality/docs/Cameron=Meade_submission.pdf** Accessed 23.6.08

Catterick, D. (2004) Mapping and managing cultural beliefs about language learning of Chinese EAP learners. In Sheldon: 65-78 , L. (Ed.) *Directions for the Future. Issues in English for Academic Purposes*. Bern: Peter Lang

Cobb, T. & Horst, M. (2001) Reading academic English: Carrying learners across the lexical threshold. In Flowerdew and Peacock: 315-29

Cotterall, S. (1995) Readiness for autonomy: investigating learner beliefs. *System* 23.2: 195-205

Cotton, F. (2004) 'The lecturer doesn't want my opinion.' Mismatched expectations: pedagogical approaches. In Sheldon: 91-102

Coxhead, A. & Nation, P. (2001) The specialized vocabulary of English for academic purposes. In Flowerdew and Peacock: 252-67

Demirkan-Jones, N. (2006) Exploring the importance of 'identity' for the East Asian students in an EAP context: a case study. In *The East Asian Learner*. BALEAP PIM Report, University of Winchester, 25 February, 2006

Dooey, P. (2006) Identifying the listening and speaking needs of international students. In *Experience of Learning*. Proceedings of the 15th Annual Teaching Learning Forum, 1-2 February 2006. Perth: The University of Western Australia.

Etherington, S. (2007) Teaching and testing academic writing: exploring staff and learner experiences. In Alexander, O. (Ed.) *New Approaches to Materials Development for Language Learning*. Bern: Peter Lang: 241-252

Evans, S. & Green, C. (2007) Why EAP is necessary: A survey of Hong Kong tertiary students. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 6, 3-17

Ferris, D. and Tagg, T. (1996) Academic oral communication needs of EAP learners: what subject-matter instructors actually require. *TESOL Quarterly* 30.1: 31-58

Flowerdew, J. and Peacock, M. (2001a) Issues in EAP: A preliminary perspective. In Flowerdew and Peacock: 8-24

Flowerdew, J. and Peacock, M. (Eds.) (2001b) Research Perspectives on *English for Academic Purposes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Flowerdew, J. and Peacock, M. (2001c) The EAP curriculum: Issues, methods and challenges. In Flowerdew and Peacock: 177-94

Gillett, A. and Wray, L. (Eds.) (2006a) *Assessing the Effectiveness of EAP Programmes*. London: BALEAP

Gillett, A. and Wray, L. (2006b). EAP and success. In Gillett and Wray: 1-11

Graddol, D. (2006) *English Next*. London: British Council

Green, R. (2000) Life after the pre-sessional course: How students fare in their departments. In Blue, G., Milton, J. and Saville, J. (Eds.) *Assessing English for Academic Purposes*. Bern: Peter Lang: 131-45

Harris, R. & Thorp, D. (1999) Language, culture and learning: Some missing dimensions to EAP. In Bool and Luford: 5-18

Hirsh, D. (2007) English language, academic support and academic outcomes: a discussion paper. *University of Sydney Papers in TESOL* 2,2: 193-211

Hyland, K. & Hamp-Lyons, L. (2002) EAP: issues and directions. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 1, 1-12

Jin, Y-h. (2007) Investigating the difficulties in speaking English for academic purposes- a case study of a Chinese student. *Sino-US English Teaching* 4.4: 24-29.

Jones, J. (1999) From silence to talk: Cross-cultural ideas on students' participation in academic group discussion. *English for Specific Purposes*, 18, 3, 243-259

Jordan, R. (2002) The growth of EAP in Britain. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 1, 69-78

Kim, S. (2006) Academic oral communication needs of East Asian international graduate students in non-science and non-engineering fields. *English for Specific Purposes*, 25, 479–489

Love, K. and Arkoudis, K. (2006) Teachers' stances towards Chinese international students: An Australian case study. *Linguistics and Education*, 17, 258–282

Lynch, T. (2001) Promoting EAP learner autonomy in a second language university context. In Flowerdew and Peacock: 390-403

Martala, M. (2006) Tracking pre-sessional students' writing abilities at the University of Hertfordshire. In Gillett and Wray: 40-55

Millar, M. (2002) Post-foundation progress: a case of rakes or pilgrims. In *Foundation Courses*. BALEAP PIM report, 16 November, 2002. Available at **http://www.baleap.org.uk/pimreports/2002/ukc/report.htm**

Montgomery, C. and Pearsall, L. (1999) Some different expectations of a selection of Pre-sessional EAP projects. In Bool and Luford: 125-34

Moore, T. & Morton, J. (2005) Dimensions of difference: a comparison of university writing and IELTS writing. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 4, 43-66

Paltridge, B. (2001) Linguistic research and EAP pedagogy. In Flowerdew and Peacock: 55-70

Pilcher, N. (2006) Mainland Chinese postgraduate students during their masters dissertations: Some reflections and thoughts on the effectiveness of EAP from the student's perspective. In Gillett and Wray: 56-71

Porter, D. (1997) The English & Study Skills Component of the International Access Programme: The Last Outpost of Apartheid. In *Integrating English Language Units into Validated Courses*. BALEAP PIM Report. University of Hertfordshire, 1997. **http://www.baleap.org.uk/pimreports/1997/herts/report.htm**

Read, J. and Hirsh, D. (2005) *English language levels in tertiary institutions*. Export Education Levy project E4. Wellington: Education New Zealand

Richards, R. (2004) Presenting critical thinking as a study strategy for UK higher education. In Sheldon: 51-62

Ridley, D. (2006) Tracking a cohort of pre-sessional students at Sheffield Hallam University. In Gillett and Wray: 24-39

Ryan, J. and Hellmundt, S. (2003) Excellence through diversity: internationalisation of curriculum and pedagogy. 17th IDP International Education Conference, October 2003. Available at **http://www.aiec.idp.com/pdf/HellmunRyanFr.0900_p.pdf** Accessed 27.6.08

Saunders, S. (2006) Does EAP work? A personal view. In Gillett and Wray: 110-113

Scholey, M. (2008) *A Review of CLIL Worldwide*. Reading: CfBT Education Trust

Sheldon, L. (Ed.) (2004) *Directions for the Future. Issues in English for Academic Purposes*. Bern: Peter Lang

Sinclair, C. (1997) University of Hertfordshire International Foundation Programme (UHIFP) – the English language component. In *Integrating English Language Units into Validated Courses*. BALEAP PIM Report. University of Hertfordshire, 1997. Available at **http://www.baleap.org.uk/pimreports/1997/herts/report.htm** Accessed 17.6.08

Swales, J. (2001) EAP-related linguistic research: an intellectual history. In Flowerdew and Peacock: 42-54

White, R. (2004) The ivory tower in the marketplace. In Sheldon: 31-41

Wilhelm, K. (1997) Language – not the only barrier. *Asian Journal of English Language Teaching*, 7, 55-75

Williams, E. and Williams, A. (2007) *ESOL and EFL: an unhelpful distinction?* Reading: CfBT Education Trust

Wyllie, A. (1997) Preparing teachers for an integrated lecture-seminar cycle. In *Training and Induction in EAP*. BALEAP PIM Report 6, University of Sussex, 7 June 1997. Available at **http://www.baleap.org.uk/pimreports/1997/sussex/report.htm**

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/6498619.stm

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/7358528.stm Accessed 26/6/08

APPENDIX 1: Comparison of IELTS and TOEFL

Test	International English Language Testing System (IELTS)	Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)
Run by	British Council, Cambridge ESOL, IDP Australia	Educational Testing Service (ETS)
Test of	British and Australian English in academic context	American English in academic context
Consists of	4 parts: Listening, Reading, Writing & Speaking For university entry candidates take academic version in reading and writing papers.	2 versions: Internet-based (ib) and paper-based (pb). The latter is being phased out. The ib TOEFL consists of 4 parts: Reading, Listening, Speaking, Writing The pb TOEFL consists of 4 parts: Listening, Structure, Reading & Writing
Time	2 hours 45 mins	4 hours
Scores	Candidates score 0-9 in each part, with 0.5 scores used for all parts of test.	Candidates score 0-120 (ib) or 310-677 (pb) Writing is assessed on a separate scale in the pb version TWE (test of written English) 0-6
Candidates	940,000 (2007)	825,000 (2005, ib only)
NB	Some criticism by Canadian universities over use of British and Australian accents Claims that the writing test does not accurately reflect authentic academic writing	Paper based version does not include speaking test

For a detailed comparison of the contents of the tests, see:
http://www.pro-match.com/toeic/TOEFLvsIELTSComparisonChart.pdf

APPENDIX 2: Exam levels comparison

There is no official table of equivalence between the main exams. The figures below are a synthesis of charts from Sheffield University English Centre, Vancouver English Centre and the Centre for English Language Education, University of Nottingham.

Common European Framework level (CEF)	Cambridge ESOL	IELTS Band	TOEFL ib
		8.0+	110-120
C2 Proficient	CPE	7.5	109
		7.0	100
C1 Advanced	CAE	6.5	88
		6.0	79
B2 Independent	FCE	5.5	71

APPENDIX 3: IELTS Descriptors for Band Scores 5–9

9 Expert user – Has fully operational command of the language: appropriate, accurate and fluent with complete understanding.

8 Very good user – Has fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriacies. Misunderstandings may occur in unfamiliar situations. Handles complex detailed argumentation well.

7 Good user – Has operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings in some situations. Generally handles complex language well and understands detailed reasoning.

6 Competent user – Has generally effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings. Can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations.

5 Modest user – Has partial command of the language, coping with overall meaning in most situations, though is likely to make many mistakes. Should be able to handle basic communication in own field.

CfBT Education Trust
60 Queens Road
Reading
Berkshire
RG1 4BS

0118 902 1000
www.cfbt.com

PMS 4748 09/09 ISBN: 978-0-86160-070-0