The first issue of Prospect for 2007 has a strong focus on practice. The first three articles all arise out of research studies conducted in the context of the Adult Migrant English Programme (AMEP) in Australia and address the issue of professional development for teachers, while the remaining two articles tackle the issue of strategies at the programme level and at the level of the individual. In the first article, Julian Edge reports on an approach known as cooperative development, which is designed to support teachers to grow both in terms of their expertise and their flexibility. The underlying principle is one of using non-judgmental discourse to help other teachers become more aware of both issues and solutions to problems that they identify in their practices. Such an approach not only assists individual teachers in their development as professionals, but can also enhance a sense of collegiality as teachers develop a shared community of practice. Using data from project participants, Edge demonstrates how the approach works and briefly explores reactions to its use.

The next two articles illustrate the professional development benefits for teachers of participation in research projects. Gillian Wigglesworth and Denise Murray report on the impact on the knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and practices of teachers who participated in a research project designed to document uses of first-language support in the adult English language classroom. They use the teachers’ reflections on their involvement in the project to illustrate the central point that research projects can offer teachers a very valuable opportunity to reflect on issues relevant to their practice in a targeted way, and thus constitute a stimulating and engaging form of professional development.

In the third article, Julie Deblaquiere and Alan Williams explore the professional development dimension of teacher involvement in research projects that focused on developing appropriate topic content for two specific target groups of learners in the AMEP. They draw on their experience in these projects to demonstrate that, even when teachers have ultimate aims that are different from those of researchers, a collaborative research project can provide a productive basis for teacher professional development. Focusing on a range of issues that arose in projects, they illustrate how the tensions between research and professional development agendas can lead to productive outcomes for both teachers and researchers.

The final two articles address the use of strategies. Wendy Lam, focuses on the individual, and investigates the use of strategies from the perspective of individual learners. In her study, she uses stimulated recall to try to open
up the ‘black box’ of the students’ minds as secondary school learners in Hong Kong attempt to use English to undertake a speaking task.

In contrast, Nick Shackleford and Chelsea Blickem address the issue of what strategies can best support the language needs of English as an Additional Language students studying in their first year of business programmes, and evaluate how one tertiary institution addresses this issue. They offer recommendations for a language development model and identify key characteristics for the institution’s provision of language support to students. Both articles offer practical insights for practitioners.

LYNDA YATES
Book review

Genre, text, grammar: Technologies for teaching and assessing writing

Reviewed by Pornsawan Brawn

The book *Genre, text, grammar: Technologies for teaching and assessing writing* by P. Knapp and M. Watkins focuses on teaching and assessing writing from a systemic functional linguistics perspective that views texts as social processes used to perform social tasks rather than as merely products to be analysed and discussed. The authors argue that syntactic and semantic choices are influenced by the context of situation in which language is used, and they examine the teaching and learning of grammar in this light. Since language reflects social process, speech and writing have a fundamentally different organisation and this is clearly explained in the book. Texts are more than linguistic artefacts; they are strategies, games, instructions and ways of getting things done (p 20), and different types of texts have distinctive characteristics. Teachers therefore need to be able to identify and work with these characteristics so that they can assist learners to recognise the generic purpose of the texts they are writing, rather than simply replicate ‘rule-governed’ formulas.

The authors argue that, because of the close connection between genre (the social context and relations in which texts are produced), text (the language processes we use to construct products) and grammar (the choices and limitations language users have when putting words together in texts), grammar should be taught in ways that relate to how language is being used for particular purposes. Grammar provides technical understanding of language, and should be taught in the context of genre.

Drawing on the work of Vygotsky, Halliday and Painter, the book emphasises the need for greater teacher direction in learning to write. This notion is, in my view, to the teaching of all four micro-skills, not only writing, and supports an approach that introduces new knowledge within the familiar and moves from concrete to abstract knowledge (p 83). I support the five pedagogic principles endorsed by the authors:

- The movement from concrete to abstract knowledge.
- Iterative practice, which helps learners to gain greater competency and
the ability to manipulate text. Students learn by using varied practice to develop an understanding of all aspects of writing.

- Concentrated treatment of knowledge and skills – units of work cannot be rushed. Teachers need to devote time and attention to content knowledge and language. The balance of whole-class instruction, group work and independent work needs to be considered carefully.

- Explicit and systemic instruction – teachers need to be specific about what they are teaching.

- Diagnostic assessment – using worksheets that target particular skills and knowledge relevant to the instructional content of the unit of work enables teachers to assess effectiveness of their teaching.

The authors have succeeded in addressing issues of both theory and practice and in making the ideas accessible for readers. The book contains the annotations of a range of students’ writing and a diagnostic model of assessing writing, together with ideas for classroom use, and is therefore a very useful resource for not only the teaching of writing, but also for an overall understanding of the relationship between theory and practice. Although many of the models for each generic structure are taken from the school levels, they are adaptable for adult ESL (for example, Chapter Seven, the genre of arguing). Through the texts we have an opportunity to explore the key grammatical features of each genre – the use of, for example, modality, mental verbs and connectives in the genre of argument – while maintaining a close connection between content and language.

I found the book to be informative and user-friendly, while providing a ‘digestible’ resource for teachers both in school and in adult education. It avoids excessive and academic use of metalanguage that may be distracting for readers, and takes a pedagogical perspective that teachers will find refreshing. The book provides models of language grounded in the relationship between genre, text and grammar, and illustrates how to design and scaffold our teaching in conjunction with texts to help learners achieve success in their writing. It will therefore be very useful for those involved in programme design, and writers of teaching materials, and I highly recommend it as a useful resource for school and TESOL libraries.
Notes on contributors

Chelsea Blickem is an Academic Advisor within the Academic Development Unit at Unitec, New Zealand. As part of this role Chelsea co-ordinates and contributes to the ongoing development of teaching, learning, assessment initiatives and excellence at Unitec, and addresses issues surrounding the implementation of national policies. A particular area of interest is the development of language and academic literacies, following her previous experience as a language learner and teacher. Chelsea has an MA in Applied Linguistics from Macquarie University in Australia, where she was also awarded the Vice Chancellor’s Commendation and an Academic Merit Prize for her studies.

Julie Deblaquiere is a research officer at the AMEP Research Centre at La Trobe University.

Julian Edge is a Senior Lecturer in Education at the University of Manchester, England. The project referred to in this article was initiated while he was a Research Director at the AMEP Research Centre, based at Macquarie University, Sydney. Apart from the teacher development activities foregrounded here, he also pursues socio-political interests in TESOL, as evidenced by his latest book, (Re)Locating TESOL in an Age of Empire, Palgrave, 2006.

Wendy Lam is Associate Professor in the Department of English at the Hong Kong Institute of Education. She specialises in English language education and has been teaching on both pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes. Her teaching and research interests include oral second language teaching and learning, learner strategies, second language acquisition and language arts. She obtained a PhD from the School of Education at the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom.

Denise E Murray is Professor Emeritus at Macquarie University and San Jose State University. Her research interests include technology and language teaching, the use of L1 in language education. She was formerly the Director of the National Centre of English Language Teaching and Research at Macquarie University, Sydney.

Nick Shackleford is Head of the School of Languages at Unitec, a position he has held since 1991. Nick is responsible for the development and operation of English language programmes for international students and for the BA programme of international languages with majors in Chinese, German, Japanese and Spanish. Nick has established a range of institutional
relationships with universities in Asia and Europe to facilitate exchange programmes for students of international languages and for Study Abroad students coming to Unitec. He holds a MA in Education (Educational Administration) First Class Honours from the University of Auckland and a MA in Applied Linguistics from Macquarie University in Australia.

Alan Williams is a Lecturer in TESOL in the School of Educational Studies at La Trobe University, Bundoora, and a Senior Researcher in the AMEP Research Centre. He has extensive experience in the use of content-based language teaching in the secondary New Arrivals programme, and has researched content-based approaches to language teaching, including in the AMEP Research Centre Special Projects Research Programme for the AMEP Research Centre in 2005 and 2006.