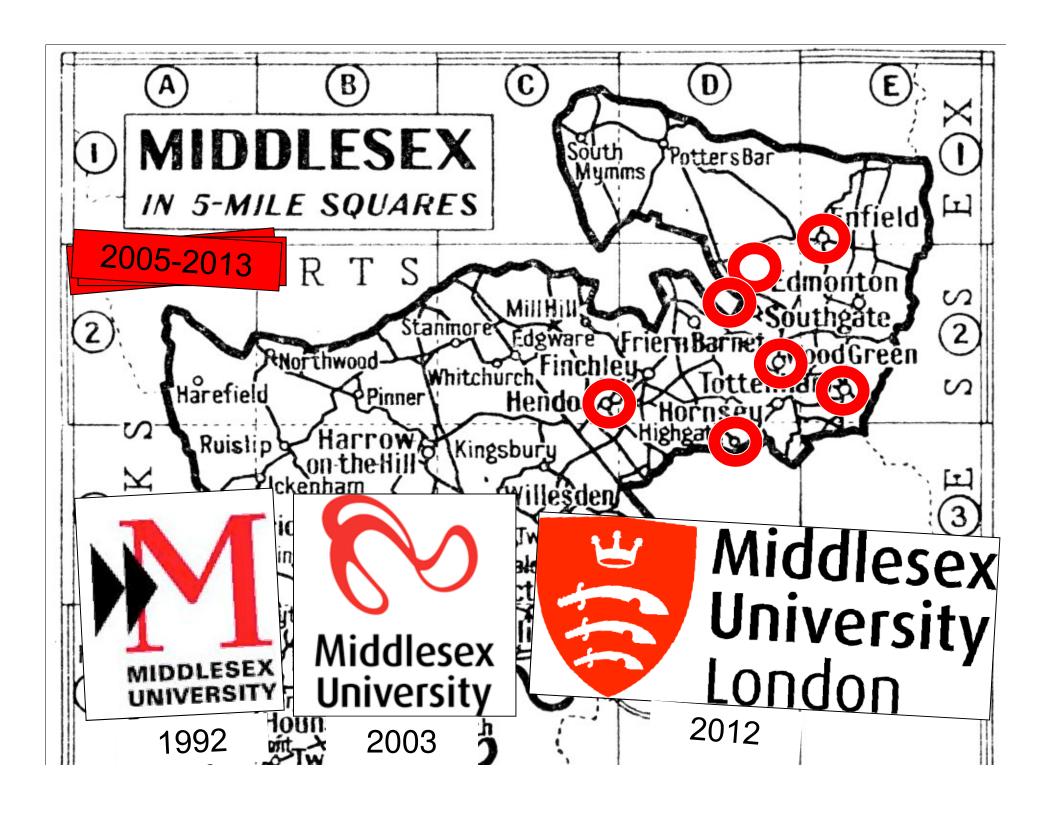# Looking back and moving ahead

## The development of an academic writing and language unit

*When you're finished changing, you're finished.*
*(Benjamin Franklin, 1706-1790)*

Peter Thomas
Dr Paula Bernaschina
Academic Writing & Language, Learner Development Unit

Middlesex University

MIDDLESEX
IN 5-MILE SQUARES

2005-2013

1992

2003

2012

The composition of the cohort this year is amazing: in one seminar group there are 24 students and 24 nationalities!

Lecturer comment, 2010
School of Health and Social Sciences

25,725 in London

large

student body

ethnic minorities 55% of home students in London

mature 53% of full time students

international 23%

WP

International

diverse

Source: 2010-11 statistical digest

**Learning Resources**
**1994**

- English Language & Learning Support (ELLS)
- In-sessional ELLS
- Pre-sessional ELLS
- Dyslexia Support
- Numeracy Support

**Centre for Learning and Teaching Enhancement**
**2010**

- Learner Development Unit (LDU)
- Academic Writing & Language
- Dyslexia Support
- Maths, Statistics & Numeracy Support
- Student Learning Assistants

**Library & Student Services**
**2013**

- LDU
- Academic Writing & Language
- Maths, Statistics & Numeracy Support
- Pre-sessional
- Dyslexia Support
- Student Learning Assistants

**2013**

Science & Technology

Business

Health & Education | Archway campus

Law

Art & Design

Media & Performing Arts

Institute of Work-Based Learning

Academic Writing & Language coordination
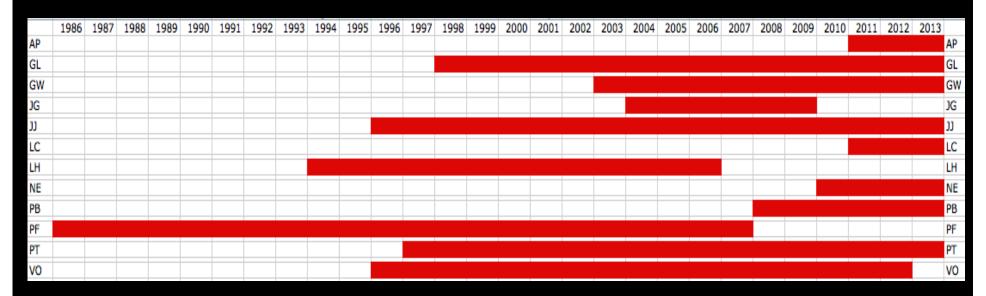
# Method

role  position

Survey focusing on  practices   relationships

Interviews with colleagues (& former colleagues)

Structured questionnaire (online)

10 participants (plus PT & PB)

| | 1986 | 1987 | 1988 | 1989 | 1990 | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | |
|----|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|----|
| AP | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ██ | ██ | ██ | AP |
| GL | | | | | | | | | | | | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | GL |
| GW | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | GW |
| JG | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | | | | | JG |
| JJ | | | | | | | | | | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | JJ |
| LC | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ██ | ██ | ██ | LC |
| LH | | | | | | | | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | | | | | | | | LH |
| NE | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | NE |
| PB | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | PB |
| PF | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | | | | | | | PF |
| PT | | | | | | | | | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | PT |
| VO | | | | | | | | | | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | ██ | | VO |

# Informing AWL provision

*Principled eclecticism*
Widdowson 1990

**Discipline-specific writing**
(e.g. Medway 1996; Lees-Maffei 2012)

**Academic literacies**
(e.g. Lea & Street 1998; Lillis 2003)

**Composition studies / writing development**
(e.g. Elbow 1998; Bereiter & Scardamalia 1987)

**Genre Analysis**
(e.g. Swales 2004; Nesi & Gardner 2012 )

**Linguistic ethnography**
(e.g. Rampton, et al. 2004)

**CLIL / ICL**
(e.g. Jacobs 2005 & 2010)

**Argument**
(e.g. Mitchell & Andrews 2000;)

**EAP / Critical EAP / ESP**
(e.g. Alexander et al. 2008; Turner 2011; Benesch 2001; Pennycook 1997)

**Situated learning**
(Lave and Wenger 1991)

**Critical Pedagogy**
(e.g. Friere 1996; Giroux 2011)

**Study Skills**
(e.g. Cottrell 2001; Murray 2011)

**Corpus Linguistics**
(e.g. Sinclair 1991; Biber et al 1998)

**Discourse Analysis**
(e.g. Fairclough 1992)

**Functional systemic linguistics**
(Halliday 1995)

**WiD / WAC**
(e.g. Bazerman, et al. 2005; Deane & O'Neil 2011)

# Role

Student facing/institution facing

Supporting the P&A of the student body

Supporting the individuals that we work with

Help staff/help students

Staff need to understand the specialised needs of their students

Students need to understand the specialised needs of their course

## Home students/International students

Students from diverse backgrounds

Not always suitably prepared for academic study

# Practices

Teaching - Embedded/Non-embedded

Workshops – Courses, One-off, Campaign-related, The Writing Space

Tutorials (LDU-driven)

Embedded sessions – Lectures, Workshops, Seminars, Labs, Crits, Vivas

(School-driven)

Planning - Inconsistent/Systematic

Close collaboration with (some) lecturers

Boards of Studies, Departmental meetings, Validations

Core modules targeted

Schools receive unbalanced attention

# Practices

Pedagogy - EAP/Ac Lits

Language focus – nuts & bolts

Reading/writing processes – writing to learn/learning to write

Assignment driven (products) – genre characteristics, disciplinary/lecturer expectations

Generic/subject-specific

Team - Unified values/Varied approaches

Values - Student-focused, critical, supportive, ambitious

Approaches - Range of genres, student need, personal interest

# Position

## Space / no space

Office & Learning Lounge

## Central / Marginal

Part of degree programmes

Puppets/baby-sitters?

Adaptable

Misrepresented

Validations

Admissions

P&A policy

## Active / passive

Forge own identity

PVC, research, experts

At the whim of institution

LR-CLTE-LSS

## Unique / one of many

Acknowledged & respected

Numerous support services in LSS

# Relationships

## Important

Help make provision effective

Access to influence/funds

Security

## Take time/patience

Personal connections matter

Need to be worked on all the time (Jacobs, 2010)

'Tussle and trust'

## Different types/levels

Strategy (PVC)

Teaching (lecturers)

GTAs/SLAs

## Current priorities

Integration with support services & SU (collaborative campaigns) bandwagon?

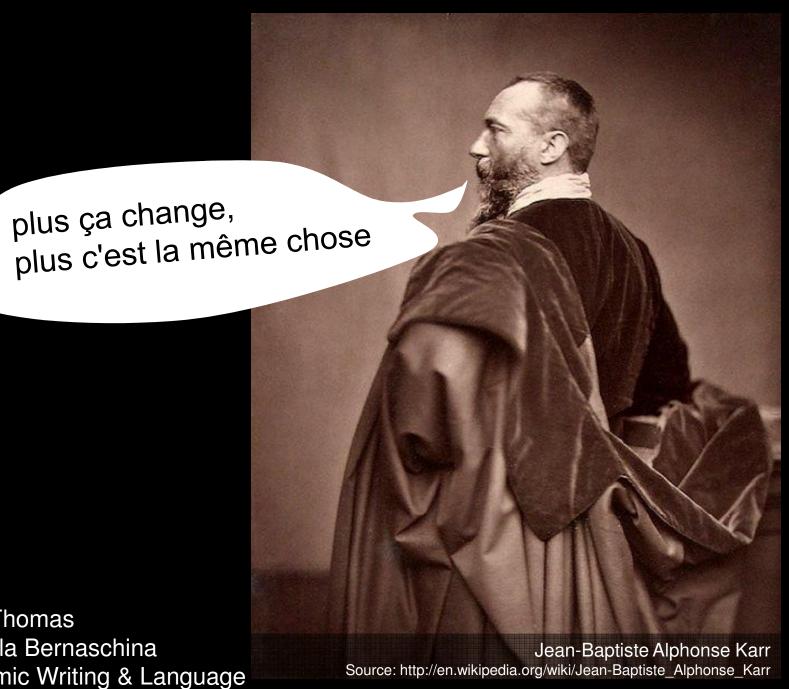More sustainable relationships

# Conclusion

More engrained

Identity | our responsibility | institutions are fickle

Tension

Systematic (?)

Imprecise memories

Complete the picture

plus ça change,
plus c'est la même chose

Peter Thomas
Dr Paula Bernaschina
Academic Writing & Language

Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean-Baptiste_Alphonse_Karr

# References

Alexander, O., S. Argent, J. Spencer, (2008) *EAP Essentials*. Reading: Garnet Publishing.

Bazernan, C., J. Little, L. Bethel, T. Chavkin, D. Fouquette & J. Garufis (2005) *Reference Guide to Writing Across the Curriculum*. West Lafayette: Parlour Press, http://wac.colostate.edu/books/bazerman_wac/wac.pdf [accessed 12/2/2012]

Benesch, S. (2001) *Critical English for Academic Purposes: Theory, Politics, and Practice*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Bereiter, C., & M. Scardamalia (1987) *The psychology of written composition.* Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Biber, D., S. Conrad & R. Reppen *Corpus Linguistics: Investigating Language Structure and Use.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cottrell, S. (2001) *Teaching Study Skills and Supporting Learning*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Deane. M. & P. O'Neill, (2011) *Writing in the Disciplines*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Elbow, P. (1998) Writing With Power. New York: Oxford University Press.

Fairclough, Norman (1992) *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Freire, P. (1996) *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. London: Penguin.

# References

Giroux, H. A. (2011) *On Critical Pedagogy*, New York: Continuum International.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1995) *Introduction to Functional Grammar.* London: Edward Arnold.

Jacobs, C. (2005) 'On Being an Insider on the Outside: New Spaces for Integrating Academic Literacies'. *Teaching in Higher Education*. 10:4 (Oct) pp.475-487

Jacobs, C. (2010) 'Collaboration as Pedagogy: Consequences and Implications for Partnerships between Communication and Disciplinary Specialists'. *South African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies*. 28: 3, 227-237, http://dx.doi.org/10.2989/16073614.2010.545025 [accessed 5/3/2012]

Jordan, R. R. (1997) *English for Academic Purposes: A Guide and resource Book for Teachers.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lave, J. & E. Wenger (1991) *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lea, M. & Street, B. V. (1998) 'Student Writing and Staff Feedback in Higher Education: An Academic Literacies Approach' *Studies in Higher Education.* 23(2):157-72.

Lees-Maffei, G. (2012) *Writing as Design: Words and Objects*. London: Berg.

Lillis, T. (2003) 'Student Writing as 'Academic Literacies': Drawing on Bakhtin to Move from Critique to Design'. *Language and Education*. Vol. 17, No. 3, 2003. 192-207.

# References

Medway, P (1996) 'Virtual and Material Buildings: Construction and Constructivism in Architecture and Writing', *Written Communication*, 13, 4, 473-514

Mitchell, S. & R. Andrews (eds.) (2000) *Learning to Argue in Higher Education.* Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook.

Murray, R. (2011) *How To Write A Thesis*. Maidenhead: Open University Press

Nesi, H., and Gardner, S. (2012) *Genres across the Disciplines: Student writing in higher education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pennycook, A. (1997) 'Vulgar pragmatism, critical pragmatism, and EAP.' *English for Specific Purposes*. 16, 253–26

Rampton, B., K. Tusting, J. Maybin, R. Barwell, A. Creese and V. Lytra (2004) 'UK Linguistic Ethnography: A Discussion Paper'. Paper published at www.ling-ethnog.org.uk [accessed July 2011]

Sinclair, J. (1991) *Corpus, concordance, collocation: Describing English language.* (Oxford, Oxford University Press)

Swales, J. (2004) *Genre Analysis.* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press)

Turner, J. (2011) *Language in the Academy: Cultural Reflexivity and Intercultural Dynamics*. Bristol, Multilingual Matters