

Critical Intersections: the 12th Biennial Conference of the
Association for Academic Language and Learning, University
of Wollongong 25-27th November 2015'

“We’ll just see how it goes...”

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**Academic and Peer Support Services
Deakin University**

November 25-27 2015



Association for Academic Language and Learning



THE METAPHOR

How do you get a date with a discipline specialist?

- Making contact
- Arranging a time
- Designing a support plan/framework
- Gathering resources
- Evaluating the work
- Following up



How do we build embedded relationships?



IS IT ME YOU'RE LOOKING FOR?



Can we ever get the George Clooney of embedding relationships?

Embedded support is provided by **working with discipline staff** but **not** in the actual delivery ...

(Briguglio 2014)

Six elements for successful inter-disciplinary collaboration.

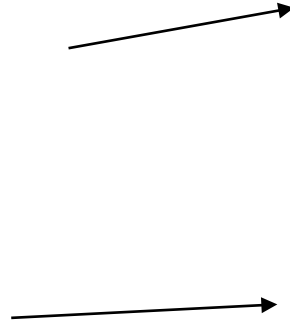
- interdependence
- newly-created professional activities
- flexibility
- collective ownership of goals
- reflection on process
- personal characteristics



MUST LOVE 'CLOUD'



“Part of the success is due to the LA’s personal characteristics; her focus, her commitment, her flexibility, and part of it is her capacity to meld with the lecture, one colleague stressed. Another lecturer, who has been involved throughout the three semesters, stressed the importance of the LA’s —adaptability and her preparedness to come to grips [with new material] and do whatever fits the group” (Harris and Aston 2011, p.79).



Long term relationship with view to embedding...

- *Two heads as one in the Cloud (Deakin LMS) ...*
- *Coffee dates to scaffold learning...*
- *Longs walks on evaluation processes...*
- *Skyping and sharing pedagogical moments...*



OUR CASE STUDY

BACKGROUND

Context

- New to LLA work/Team Leader work
- LIVE (Online) agenda – online support needed
- First request in the new paradigm

Case Study

- Postgraduate coursework
- Online unit
- Human resource management
- Requested 'report writing' support



'IT'S NOT YOU... IT'S...'

Research Aims

To explore the issues that affect 'relationship building' through analysis of the DS/LLA negotiation 'discourse'.



DATA COLLECTION

- Reflection notes
- Transcriptions of 3 meetings with the academic in charge of the unit (approx 2.5 hours of recordings)
- One Team Leader (**Vittoria**) , one LA (**Caroline**) , one academic (**Elisabeth**)
- Ethics approval sought in accordance with guidelines



DATA ANALYSIS

Critical discourse analysis

“Research projects in discourse analysis are, therefore, most sensibly defined first in terms of questions about particular forms of social practice, and their relations to social structure;”

(Fairclough, 1992, p. 226).



SOCIAL CONTEXT

Modern University

- wider participation
- autonomous
- greater number of knowledge workers
- competitive



The way we (DS,LLA) talk is a **result of the way we are institutionally positioned and organised.**

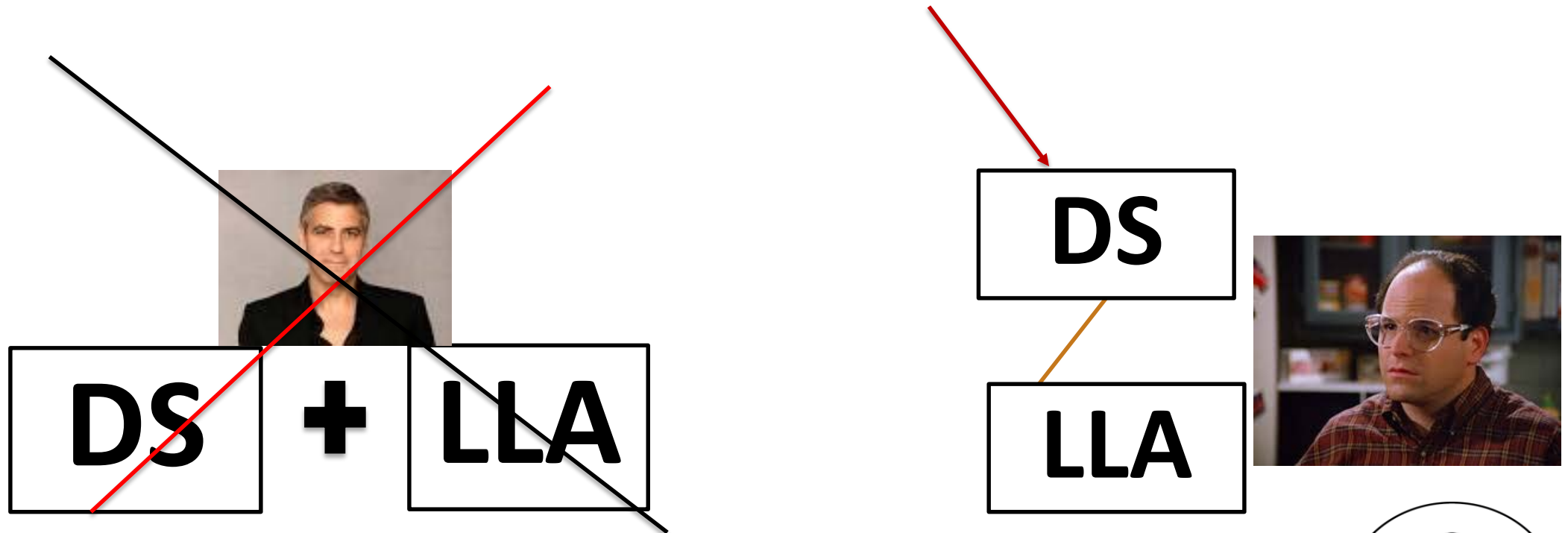
POWER AND RELATIONAL TALK IN INSTITUTIONAL DISCOURSE

'Relational work.... includes the entire spectrum of of the interpersonal side of social practice' (Locher and Watts 2008, p. 78)



POWER RELATIONS

Asymmetrical interactions = unequal power relationships



Do we have the George Clooney or the George Costanza ?



LLA POSITION...

Academic Language and Learning Lecturers (ALLs) are charged with working alongside discipline lecturers (DLs) to embed academic language and learning within the curriculum" (Macdonald, Schneider & Kett 2013, p A-11).

Our work requires complex negotiation and relational building to:

- get the work
- do the work
- maintain and develop the work

Is our talk the work?



WHO IS WHO?

Listen to some examples from the data (transcribed interviews) and decide who is DS and LA.

- What do you notice about the ‘talk’?
- How does it reflect/differ from your own experiences?



HOW DO WE TALK?...

Micro features

1. floor /turn-taking, topic sharing (keep the turns going, truncated turns, length of turns)
2. tentative about suggestions, downplay our own ideas (hedging, modals)
3. avoid disagreements (agreement markers)
4. downplay criticisms



IMPLICATIONS

Our 'dates' are often one offs/flings/fleeting moments..



We are evaluated on both getting the work, negotiating the outcomes as well as doing and maintaining/building on the work...



Hard skills are not always at the forefront..

The 'talk' is the work



How do we maintain our own professional identities in the interactions?



... what people do in institutional encounters is produced, overall, as a result of this interplay between their interactional and discursive role and their institutional identity and status”
(Thornborrow, 2002, p. 5)



FUTURE DIRECTIONS: MODELS

Strategic management

Duke (cited in Brunken and Delly, 2009, p. 19) argues that universities must

“learn to change and to do new things in new ways” and we were faced with the prospect of looking at our ‘traditional’ modes of delivery and changing them to meet the changing environment.



FUTURE DIRECTIONS: OUR ANALYSIS

Talk is socially constructed practice. We wanted to explore how these interactions evolve over time, what sort of interactions we end up having.

At what point supporting students at this level becomes and sounds like a shared goal not a sales pitch? What changes are necessary to make this happen?



“DID THAT GO OK?”

Both Georges are out there; but sometimes Clooney comes along and offers you a place in their **room and their Cloud**. This is manifested in the ‘talk’ .



“I thought I’d call you early...

Doesn’t everybody want you in their unit?

Isn’t it normal...?”

What did George Clooney look like?

- An natural expectation that we were part of planning and delivery.
- A place embedded into the weekly resources in the Cloud (LMS)-**not** as an **adjunct** Study Support folder.
- Requests for feedback on how the students and the course is going.



Week 2 - RESEARCH WORLD VIEWS AND APPROACHES + CRITICAL READING AND EFFECTIVE NOTE TAKING

Starts 13 July, 2015 5:44 PM

Add a description...

New Add Existing Activities Bulk Edit

EchoSystem

SRR71x_2015_T2- week2_research world views and approaches

Starts 21 July, 2015 1:00 PM

Critical Reading

Writing a literature review links

Here we are

REFERENCES

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Brunken A & Delly P 2009, 'Can business principles be adapted to higher education to improve the provision of study support to diverse student cohorts?', *The International Journal of Learning*, vol. 16, no. 4, pp 13-26.

Fairclough, N 1992, *Discourse and social change*, Polity Press, Cambridge, UK.

Harris, A & Ashton, J 2011, 'Embedding and integrating language and academic skills: an innovative approach', *Journal of Academic Language & Learning* vol. 5, no. 2, A73-A87, retrieved 8 December 2015, <http://journal.aall.org.au/index.php/jall/article/view/158>.

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Thornborrow, J, 2002 *Power Talk: language and interaction in institutional discourse*, Pearson Education, Edinburgh, Great Britain

