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“Sometimes I struggled”: Integrating Language and Content in an Academic Literacy Course for Engineering Students



In the higher education landscape, a discipline represents an epistemological framework that defines distinct philosophies and determines corresponding pedagogies. According to Kuteeva & Airey (2013), discipline-specific knowledge is closely aligned with the situated contexts in the academy, the workplace and society. To bolster students' competence for professional communication in their future discourse, language teachers are expected to attend to disciplinary disparities and provide literacy instruction in conjunction with students' disciplinary backgrounds. Whilst increasing research attention has been given to language teaching across the disciplines, explorations into language teachers' voices to incorporate language instruction into engineering-specific contexts are still in scarcity.

Contextualized in a Hong Kong university, this case study explores a junior language teacher's teaching in his academic literacy course for year-four engineering students. The researcher draws on five perspectives that impact teachers' professional roles in content and language integrated learning scenarios – culture, educational background, prior knowledge, teaching experience, and implicit attitudes (Skinnari & Bovellan, 2016). Two semi-structured interviews and six classroom observations, spanning two independent semesters, are conducted to explore this teacher's transitions to his teaching praxis.

Perspectives emerging from in-depth qualitative analysis corroborate the significance of disciplinary specificity in such an English course across the disciplines and address the discipline-specific challenges this junior language teacher is facing. The teacher's efforts to sustain dovetailing language and content in such an engineering-specific literacy course are also reported.

Key words: Academic literacy, disciplinary literacy, interdisciplinary teaching, English across the curriculum, content and language integrated learning (CLIL)

Biodata

Greg Chung-Hsien Wu completed his PhD in applied linguistics at the University of Hong Kong. He is currently a lecturer at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, teaching foundation EAP courses and ESP courses for engineering students. His main area of interest is centred on the professional development of language teachers, particularly in the field of English for Specific / Academic Purposes, interdisciplinary teaching and learning, and English across the curriculum.

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