

ELTU Conference in CUHK 5 June 2014

Conference theme: Curriculum Development, Implementation, and Review

Sub theme: Interdepartmental collaboration

Title: Interdepartmental Collaboration: Writing in the Disciplines

Abstract

Studies have shown that university students encounter different types and degrees of difficulty in coping with the writing demands in their disciplinary subjects (e.g. Leki, 1995; Spack, 1997; Angelova and Riazantseva, 1999; Jackson, 2005). Some scholars (e.g. Leki and Carson, 1997; Zhu, 2004) have pointed out the limitations of general EAP courses in helping students cope with writing in their disciplinary subjects. Apart from offering discipline-related English language courses, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University has received UGC funding to explore other ways of enhancing students' English abilities in disciplinary subjects.

In this presentation we will describe a new approach we are using to engage discipline academics in incorporating appropriate use of English in their content subjects, and how we are working with these colleagues to raise their students' awareness of the importance of language in communicating the disciplinary content. Our collaboration with discipline academics includes the design of language learning resources that align with their assignments for them to use in their subjects, as well as the rewording of assignment rubrics so that 'language use' or 'communication of content' can carry a certain assessment weighting to 'push and pull' students to consult the additional language resources when completing their assessment tasks. At the end of the talk, we will discuss the potentials and challenges of this approach.