

Design, Implementation, and Evaluation of ALS-PBL Model in the EMI Classroom

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Abstract : In the past two decades, in order to increase university visibility and internationalization, English as a medium of instruction (EMI) has become one of the main language policies in higher education institutions where English is not a dominant language. However, given the complex, discipline-embedded nature of academic communication, academic literacy does not come with students' everyday language experience, and it is a challenge for all students. Particularly, to engage students in the effective learning process of discipline concepts in the EMI classrooms, teachers need to provide explicit academic language instruction to assist students in deep understanding of discipline concepts. To bridge the gap between academic language development and discipline learning in the EMI classrooms, the researcher incorporates academic language strategies and key elements of project-based learning (PBL) into an Academic Language Strategy driven PBL (ALS-PBL) model. With clear steps and strategies, the model helps EMI teachers to scaffold students' academic language development in the EMI classrooms. ALS-PBL model includes three major stages: preparation, implementation, and assessment. First, in the preparation stage, ALS-PBL teachers need to identify learning goals for both content and language learning and to design PBL topics for investigation. Second, during the implementation stage, ALS-PBL teachers use the model as a guideline to create a lesson structure and class routine. There are five important elements in the implementation stage: (1) academic language preparation, (2) connecting background knowledge, (3) comprehensible input, (4) academic language reinforcement, and (5) sustained inquiry and project presentation. Finally, ALS-PBL teachers use formative assessments such as student learning logs, teachers' feedback, and peer evaluation to collect detailed information that demonstrates students' academic language development in the learning process. In this study, ALS-PBL model was implemented in an interdisciplinary course entitled "Science is Everywhere", which was co-taught by five professors from different discipline backgrounds, English education, civil engineering, business administration, international business, and chemical engineering. The purpose of the course was to cultivate students' interdisciplinary knowledge as well as English competency in disciplinary areas. This study used a case-study design to systematically investigate students' learning experiences in the class using ALS-PBL model. The participants of the study were 22 college students with different majors. This course was one of the elective EMI courses in this focal university. The students enrolled in this EMI course to fulfill the school language policy, which requires the students to complete two EMI courses before their graduation. For the credibility, this study used multiple methods to collect data, including classroom observation, teachers' feedback, peer assessment, student learning log, and student focus-group interviews. Research findings show four major successful aspects of implementing ALS-PBL model in the EMI classroom: (1) clear focus on both content and language learning, (2) meaningful practice in authentic communication, (3) reflective learning in academic language strategies, and (4) collaborative support in content knowledge. This study will be of value to teachers involved in delivering English as well as content lessons to language learners by providing a theoretically-sound practical model for application in the classroom.

Keywords : academic language development, content and language integrated learning, english as a medium of instruction, project-based learning

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