

Action Research-Informed Multiliteracies-Enhanced Pedagogy in an Online English for Academic Purposes Course

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Abstract : Employing a critical action research approach that rejects essentialist onto-epistemological orientations to research in English language teaching (ELT) and interrogates the hegemonic relations in the knowledge construction and reconstruction processes, this study illuminates how an action research-informed pedagogical practice can transform the English for academic purposes (EAP) teaching to be more culturally and linguistically inclusive and critically oriented for English language learners' advancement in academic literacies skills. More specifically, this paper aims to showcase the action research-informed pedagogical innovations that emphasize multilingual learners' multiliteracies engagement and experiential education-oriented learning to facilitate the development of learners' academic literacies, intercultural communicative competence, and inclusive global citizenship in the context of Canadian university EAP classrooms. The pedagogical innovations through action research embarked in response to growing discussions surrounding pedagogical possibilities of plurilingualism in ELT and synchronous online teaching. The paper is based on two iterations of action research over the pandemic years between 2020 and 2022. The data includes student work samples, focus group interviews, anonymous surveys, teacher feedback and comments on student work and teaching reflections. The first iteration of the action research focused on the affordances of multimodal expressions in individual learners' academic endeavors for their literacy skills development through individual online activities such as 'my language autobiography,' 'multimodal expression corner' and public speeches. While these activities help English language learners enhance their knowledge and skills of English-spoken discourses, these tasks did not necessarily require learners' team-based collaborative endeavors to complete the assigned tasks. Identifying this area for improvement in the instructional design, the second action research cycle/iteration emphasized collaborative performativity through newly added performance/action-based innovative learning tasks, including 'situational role-playing', 'my cooking show & interview', and group debates in order to provide learners increased opportunities to communicate with peers who joined the class virtually from different parts of the world and enhance learners' intercultural competence through various strategic and pragmatic communicative skills to collaboratively achieve their shared goals (i.e., successful completion of the given group tasks). The paper exemplifies instances wherein learners' unique and diverse linguistic and cultural strengths were amplified, and critical literacies were further developed through learners' performance-oriented multiliteracies engagement. The study suggests that the action research-informed teaching practice that advocates for collaborative multiliteracies engagement serves to facilitate learners' activation of their existing linguistic and cultural knowledge and contributes to the development of learners' academic literacy skills. Importantly, the study illuminates that such action research-informed pedagogical initiatives create an inclusive space for learners to build a strong sense of connectedness as global citizens with increased intercultural awareness in their community of language and cultural practices, and further allow learners to actively participate in the construction of 'collaborative relations of power' with their peers.

Keywords : action research, EAP, higher education, multiliteracies

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