

2:00pm - 2:40pm

Block Y, Room Y301

Presentation Title: Developing English for academic literacies for the 4-year curriculum: Extending individualised support

Presenter / Co-presenters: Mr Nigel BRUCE, The University of Hong Kong

Abstract

Students in Hong Kong – probably worldwide – receive diminishing support for their foreign language learning as they progress up the educational ladder. With the switch to a 4-year curriculum in 2012, this depletion will come a year earlier. In that light, this paper proposes a multi-pronged strategy to lay the groundwork for the enhanced provision of academic literacy support for undergraduates across HK's tertiary institutions. The current largely prescriptive approach to language teaching needs to be complemented by a descriptive approach that allows students to infer language patterns from authentic disciplinary usage, and eventually to emulate these in their assignments and dissertations. High frequency usage would replace the teacher's judgment. From being sold a bewildering number of indigestible fish, they would learn to fish for what they need. So this paper proposes an asymmetrical and autonomous model of literacy development, through web-mediated and extra-curricular tutor support, designed to help students develop their disciplinary literacy skills. The approach envisages combining

- downloadable web-based corpus-based disciplinary usage search tools
- online English-assistance programs for UG students
- an extensive (student) language tutor support scheme

It should remain the responsibility of academic literacy specialists in Language Centres of English Departments to manage such broad-based suites of resources and to constantly improve tutor training, resource richness and access, and to perhaps spend more time supporting faculty in their inevitable move to offering literacy support and development within their mainstream curricula. Examples will be given from an English for Law program, where students took responsibility for exploring legal English usage in a corpus of authentic legal cases, and presenting their findings, tutor-like, to their classmates.

Biodata

Nigel Bruce is attached to the Centre for Applied English Studies of the University of Hong Kong, and has taught academic and professional literacy skills to postgraduates in all faculties and to undergraduate Law students. He is also interested in promoting autonomous language learning and enriching writing support.