

UTS T&L Forum 2019

Paper presentation

Short abstract (100 words)

The Embedding English Language project, designed and implemented by the Academic Language and Learning team, provides whole-of-institution contextualised language support for students by screening all commencing students and then providing compulsory, discipline-specific and embedded English language tutorials for those considered in need of extra support. This presentation reports on the emerging findings from our mixed methods evaluation study of the project to date, which has adopted a pragmatic methodological approach. While the findings show that some of our strategies for supporting and motivating students were successful, we also reflect on learnings from the evaluation which will inform future iterations of the project.

Extended abstract (300 words)

In Autumn 2019, UTS launched a university-wide initiative to address English language proficiency. The Embedding English Language project, designed and implemented by the Academic Language and Learning team, is designed to provide whole-of-institution contextualised academic language support for students who enter with low levels of English. The project has four stages: (1) language screening of all commencing students; (2) mandatory language development tutorials (LDTs) for those identified as requiring extra support. The LDTs comprise 15-20 hours of extra language support in small groups over a 12-week teaching session, specifically tailored to the discipline and subject in which they are embedded; (3) milestone tasks to evaluate language development (a milestone task is typically an existing end-of-session assessment task); and (4) a series of further milestone tasks at various points in the degree programs to continuously monitor and evaluate students' language development in order to intervene and provide support when necessary.

In addition to providing students with discipline-specific and subject-specific support, the curriculum designers aim to stimulate students' language development motivation through strategies to enhance their confidence, autonomy, and awareness and ability to use available university resources (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2009; Rochecouste & Oliver, 2014). In this way, we aim to encourage sustained motivation throughout students' degree programs.

This presentation reports on the emerging findings from our mixed methods evaluation study of the project to date, which has adopted a pragmatic methodological approach. We draw on data from three sources: (1) pre- and post-language tutorial student surveys, (2) end-of-session reflections written by those teaching the language tutorials, and (3) end-of-session reflections written by the students about their plans for future language development. While the findings show that some of our strategies for motivating students were successful, we also reflect on learnings from the evaluation which will inform future iterations of the project.