An adaptable, sustainable and inclusive institution-wide model for embedding academic language and literacies

Joseph Yeo, Deborah Nixon, Caroline Havery
University of Technology Sydney

Abstract

Widening participation and internationalisation of the higher education sector have led to a more diverse student population across Australian universities; this includes domestic and international students who do not have sufficient English language proficiency (e.g., Murray, 2016), and thus, need developmental support to meet the academic language and literacy demands of their studies (e.g., O'Loughlin & Arkoudis, 2009). The institution-wide four-stage Embedding English Language Framework has been implemented at University of Technology Sydney since 2019: screening of all commencing students; mandatory discipline/subject-aligned language development programs for those identified as requiring support; milestone tasks to evaluate language development; and further milestone tasks at various points in degree programs (Edwards et al., 2021). It has proven to be adaptable throughout the disruptive global pandemic as any of the four stages can be realised in a face-to-face/online/hybrid context; it is sustainable as the teaching and learning, and assessment of communication is embedded in all core discipline subjects throughout a degree program, as supported by university-wide policies and practices (Arkoudis & Kelly, 2016; Fenton-Smith & Humphreys, 2015; Wingate, 2015); and it is inclusive as any onshore/offshore student who needs additional language support is accommodated in the framework, to help enhance their self-confidence, sense of belonging, motivation and autonomy – all key ingredients to their wellbeing, success and retention (Lantolf & Swain, 2019). Results from an ongoing evaluation show that the framework is making a positive impact on students' sense of belonging and confidence, intercultural communication, and overall academic participation and engagement.

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