

Learning English and Learning in
English –
Getting in tune with students' needs

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Overview

- Motivation for EMI learning
- Bridging programmes
- Administrative issues
- Teaching for transfer across languages
- Conditions for success

Under present conditions

- CMI school students grasp *functional* rather than *academic* or *proficient* English
- A gap exists
 - between what students learn in English lessons and what is required for content subject learning
 - between students' English level in EMI schools and that in CMI schools
- Students have difficulty meeting academic needs of subject content classes

Motivation –

- From a macro to a micro perspective – examines how motivation effects concrete learning processes within a situated classroom context (process-oriented)
- Integrative orientation – regard English as a tool with which to acquire knowledge and as a medium to learn
- Dynamic and developmental in nature, and continuously fluctuates

- a multifaceted construct composed of many different factors that vary in different situations and circumstances
- subject to various external influences, e.g. print materials, visual aids, graphic organizers, pedagogical practices, participatory activities, different groupings
- Sense of competence, sense of achievement, locus of control, enjoyment
- Emphasis on how individuals seek to bring a sense of meaning to their worlds

Bridging Programmes

- Current Bridging Programmes
 - Relatively short
 - Focus on everyday language
 - Sometimes focus on vocabulary/ glossary terms or specific grammar points
 - Some simple games & activities
 - Some simple classroom language

- Need for bridging and scaffolding that involves
 - Plentiful Exposure to Academic Language –
 - Framing of Concepts and Ideas in the content areas e.g. literature, social studies, science, mathematics
 - Comprehensible Input (large amounts of time for actual text reading needed) and a Variety of Input Resources
 - Output - whether reading or writing or speaking: final product in English
 - Expressing meaning in the use of English – not just filling in blanks of single words or simple sentences. Need to go beyond discrete language items of phonology, grammar and spelling

For the Teacher

- Language of Explanation
- Language of Exemplification
- Language of Interaction
- Language of Elicitation

Administrative and Curricular Changes Needed in School

- Preparation and Implementation of a clear School Language Policy, e.g.
 - announcements and notices
 - morning assemblies
 - when talking to teacher(s)
 - in the classroom – English classroom? Content subject classroom?
 - in the staff room/corridors/playground/ English corner
- Understanding that a Relatively Good English Threshold Level is necessary for both Teachers and Students for EMI classes

- Administrative arrangements needed so that there is *time* and *opportunity* for language teachers and content teachers to interact and discuss
- Time-table arrangement for English and content subject teachers to get together & co-plan. Academic exchange important to meet the needs of students
- Sharing of teaching materials: English & content subject lessons – what language is involved? Any common areas?

Time to be allocated to

- Peer observation: between English language teachers and content subject teachers / with other schools and other teachers to share good practices
- Teaching language common to academic subjects, e.g. root words, use of the passive voice, function words and meanings such as “*describe, define, identify, discuss, analyse, interpret, compare and contrast, summarize, construct, verify, evaluate*” etc.
- Perhaps one English lesson taken out of a cycle/two weeks for the English teacher to teach these?

- When hiring content subject teachers – level of English? Awareness of language issues?
- When hiring English teachers – level of English? Awareness of language issues in content subjects? Understanding of text types?
- Professional development of teachers

- Extensive Reading – crucial for academic language development because less frequent vocabulary, complex syntax, and abstract expressions are found primarily in written text
- Develop an English-rich environment in school where all are striving towards the same goal – provide varied learning experiences, extended learning activities, setting up Award Schemes etc.
- Insistence, Persistence & Consistency

Impossible for the teacher to teach all things in the classroom – teaching for transfer across languages

- Types of Transfer

- Of conceptual elements (e.g. understanding the concept of *photosynthesis*)
- Of metalinguistic strategies (e.g. strategies of visualizing, use of graphic organizers, vocabulary acquisition strategies, etc.)
- Of specific linguistic elements (e.g. the meaning of *photo* in *photosynthesis*)
- Of phonological awareness – that words are composed of distinct sounds
- Of pragmatic aspects of language use (e.g. take risks in communication, use of gestures to aid communication etc.)

Conditions for success

- **School Factors**

- high bilingual proficiency levels of both content and language teachers
- close partnership between language and content subject teachers helps pupils to learn English for academic purposes
- co-ordination and integration of the English language subject curriculum and content subject curriculums: language across the curriculum

Four Major Instructional Factors for Effective EMI Instruction

- High quality teaching, including clear lesson organisation, directions and explanations, appropriate aids, attention to higher level skills, and opportunities for productive oral & writing activities
- High quality instructional language, including clarity, coherence, use of contexts, paraphrasing, responding to student feedback, and discussion of grammar and vocabulary

- Effective classroom management with stress on academic rather than on non-academic activities
- Provision of equal opportunities for the practice of English – OUTPUT, whether spoken or written, to be in English, e.g. oral presentations that involve expressions of meaning, written texts based on graphic information, summarizing texts, using different text types etc.

Suggestions for enhancing the English standard

- Identify the conditions that bring about good-quality English-medium education
- Focus more on helping schools and students to develop the conditions necessary for them to benefit from English-medium education.
- Policy-makers and administrators need to focus more on improving the quality of teachers and their teaching
 - helping schools to develop a target language culture
 - helping students to acquire sound literacy skills