

What constitutes good practice in teaching a linguistically diverse class?

Alison Kirkness

Centre for Educational & Professional Development, AUT,
Alison.Kirkness@aut.ac.nz

Abstract

In the multicultural classroom at English-medium tertiary institutions today, teachers find that they can no longer make assumptions about student literacy skills. Many students do not have the academic literacy skills in English to enable them to learn effectively. As a result many institutions include the teaching of these skills in first year programmes. But who teaches them, subject teachers or language teachers? If subject teachers, then how can they be given the additional support they need to promote language development in their teaching? If language teachers, then how can they ensure that they teach the literacy skills that a particular subject requires?

This paper focuses on the various models used at one tertiary institution in New Zealand to cater for the English language needs of students in different faculties. It discusses structures and processes that support the teaching of academic literacy skills as central to developing students' ability to master content knowledge and skills. It presents models of language teachers delivering courses in academic literacy skills alongside the subject classes (adjunct courses) and of subject teachers including academic literacy skills in mainstream programmes (integrated courses). It identifies examples of good practice by teachers in curriculum design and delivery to students. Furthermore, it identifies both formal and informal teacher development that takes place when courses are designed to cater for both discipline content and language development.