



Academic literacies in peer to peer language learning programs: Students' voices in academic language development

Key Words

academic literacies, peer to peer learning, students' voices

Abstract

Sociocultural strands of literacy research have long emphasised the role of identity-making in shaping students' practices of reading and writing (Gee, 2002; McCarthy & Moje, 2002; Moje & Luke, 2009; Hull & Stornaiuolo, 2014). Becoming a capable academic reader and writer involves not only learning different academic registers but also learning the ways of being, doing, thinking and feeling (Gee, 2015) embodied by academic Discourses (Flowerdew & Wang, 2015). As such, second language development requires much more from learners than simply encoding and decoding texts. Second language learners are required to traverse different Discourses and enact specific identities as they navigate different communities of practice in the academic context (Lave, 1996; Norton & Toohey, 2011). Moreover, peer to peer learning (PPL) has been the subject of a growing body of literature that highlights how such experiences can shape and enhance students' learning outcomes in higher education (Sampson & Cohen, 2001; Adam, Skalicky & Brown, 2011). Building on these assumptions, the presentation explores the outcomes of peer to peer learning language programs focused on academic literacies at an Australian university. The presentation, based on a case study (Yin, 2009) of two English language programs, investigates how students and facilitators engage with peer to peer language learning programs and the development of students' academic literacies. Of particular relevance to this presentation is the data from the Peer Support program, which delivers one-on-one consultations to students that assist with academic writing, and the Polish Up Your Grammar workshops, which focus on grammatical features relevant to academic writing. PPL is a central organising feature of both programs and students and facilitators come either from multilingual backgrounds or are used to navigating every day multilingual situations in the university. The presentation will contextualise the demographic data generated throughout the years of 2016 and 2017 about the students who attended the two programs. In addition to the demographic data, closed and open-ended questions about the two programs were sent to all students and facilitators who participated in the two programs in 2017. The students' answers are seen as snapshots of their experiences, values and representations in relation to the program. The data is analysed using thematic analysis procedures for qualitative research (Creswell, 2009). Using an iterative process, the data is categorised into recurrent themes that highlight how students experienced the two programs. The findings highlight the holistic nature of language learning and literacy practices in a peer to peer language program. These types of programs not only enhance students' language development but also create sustainable opportunities for students to increase their multilingual repertoires.

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