

ENGLISH AS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE

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Abstract

English continues to dominate the information financial system and educational publication internationally with over 85-90% of educational publications worldwide published in English. Yet a large amount of the world's students and faculty are denied access to English speaking universities and the English information economy essential to their professional educational progression due to their insufficient educational literacy in English. These worldwide inequalities of access to information and consequent limited access to career development, educational promotions and tenure cause enormous limitations on the world-wide progress and broadcasting of information and harmfully impact the growth of local as well as global knowledge cultures. While the open courseware movement has been active in providing extensive financially-free access to public information, this public information requires educational literacy in English. Further, there are few approaches that have been proposed as to how accreditation could be obtained by the large amount of the world's students and faculty in developing countries who have access to open courseware but for financial, geological or English educational literacy limitations cannot receive academic credit for such courses. The tested and replicated Pan University Open Model that I describe in this paper successfully advances and promotes English educational literacy for students and faculty in their chosen disciplines through a Pan University electronic medium that provides both credit for contribution in an English online course for each of the participants at their individual home universities, while also providing for the specialized English as an International Language Journal. The replications of this replica of Pan University credit courses for various global audiences of students and faculty from universities in developed and developing countries has found extraordinary results for English as other language academic literacy as a result of the focus on intensive scholarly online collaboration and debate.

Keywords : *educational publication, economy, career development, educational promotions, knowledge, online collaboration, debate.*

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Introduction

English has progressively more become the international educational language due in part to the internet and new media technologies which have promoted the need for a universal language for global educational and economic communication. With over 85-90% of academic research papers being published in English on a global level (Ammon, 2006; Hamel, 2007) it is necessary that many students and faculty in all countries worldwide progress their educational English in order to participate and contribute to educational courses, conferences and publications. Access to tertiary teaching and professional achievement require reading and writing literacy in educational English and the incapability to write well in educational English comprise a barrier of massive proportions to educational and professional development. The success of educational literacy can take many years to achieve and is often never attained by many scholars in all countries and consequently these thousands of scholars are unable to optimally contribute to the worldwide knowledge economy. With increased migration globally this need for a universal educational language is only increased. In spite of this pressing worldwide need there are few efficient and practical approaches proposed to overcome this global problem.

However, this is a intimidating task and many students who have the financial resources choose to go abroad to study in a setting where they can immerse themselves in English language and culture. While all of these many initiatives are impressive, the fact remains that to increase a high educational literacy in a particular educational discipline or domain demands immersion in that particular linguistic ecological niche and

remains an elusive goal for many who cannot access such a linguistic niche for financial or geographic reasons. Due to huge world migration, even within English speaking countries including those in North America, many speakers of EOL or even those whose first and main language is English, fail to attain high levels of educational literacy and are prevented from educational publication and professional development. Many such students who satisfy the minimal English entry requirements to English speaking universities also experience complexity mastering English educational literacy. After supervising more than one hundred EOL graduate students who were brief or long term immigrants or Canadian francophones and who struggled taking graduate courses in English and writing educational theses in English, I have created an online approach which I believe has significant merit in overcoming the intractable problem of attaining high educational literacy for EOL students and faculty. English as an International Language Journal. Volume 5 2009 150.

In this paper I propose a pan university model of online seminars that can allow EOL students and faculty from developing and developed countries to advance their educational literacy in those educational areas that are of vital importance to their educational career progress. As Flowerdew (2007) has pointed out the combined pressures of globalization and marketization of the academy has created a situation where scholars need to write in English for international journals in an academic setting and where writing in English is perceived as a sort of ineluctable necessity, related to both international prestige and editorial needs, rather than a matter of free choice, by non-Anglophone scholars (Guardiano, Favilla, & Calaresu, 2007). Since it is recognized that academic literacy remains a barrier for EOL students and faculty globally (Flowerdew, 2007), this approach has centered on academic literacy in English as an access issue. Therefore, the model in this paper attempts not only to give ways to allow the participation of EOL students to appoint in research and knowledge sharing but also as a way of developing educational literacy in English as an essential part of participation.

If we recognize that one must be academically literate in English in order to progress naturally in one's educational career and we also recognize that the majority of the global population of university scholars lack optimal educational literacy then we must recognize the enormous cost globally to universities worldwide that do not efficiently advance the research knowledge enterprise through promoting English educational literacy.

Unfortunately, this very important issue has not been resolved in an efficient way due in part to the exclusive needs of each individual scholar who must master a type of educational literacy that relates to the field and control in which their educational research specializes. Therefore, conventional ESL classes are not particularly supportive to the individual educational because they do not deal with the special domains of knowledge and technical language that must be mastered. What each of these educational needs is to be immersed into a communicative situation where they actively develops communicative capability with other specialists communicating on topics and using expert and technical language that is pertinent to the area of research each individual is publishing in. The ideal condition should include a communicative atmosphere where each individual can communicate on chosen topics with other chosen specialists at chosen times. At present, due to the lack of such venues which would promote specialized educational communication in the appropriate language register and using the appropriate technical language for the appropriate domain, hundreds of thousands of leading scholars worldwide are denied their potential to optimally contribute to world knowledge and to advance toward their own career promotion. These English as an International Language Journal. Volume 5 2009 151 academics worldwide who are highly motivated to master English educational literacy are prevented from doing so because there are no highly efficient procedures for giving them access to English educational literacy in their knowledge domain. The cost to global knowledge in all disciplines is staggering because these gifted researchers spend

their professional careers unable to develop their potential as academics, (see Flowerdew, 2007 for examples). While there is a huge effort to promote ESL and EOL in the common student population, there are few choices available for graduate students and faculty to refine their English educational literacy in their particular ecological niche of discipline knowledge. The global knowledge economy would benefit substantially if this large amount of scholars worldwide could enhance their English educational literacy.

Open Course Ware (OCW)

Following MIT's highly acclaimed move to make its huge educational course resources freely accessible to the public, the number of open learning initiatives has continued to develop. International organizations such as UNESCO and the Open University jointly with public and private institutions have continued to make educational content and courses freely available to the community through the internet. The Open Course Ware Consortium has brought jointly more than 200 universities, institutions and organizations providing open education resources (OERs) and Open Course Ware (OCW). These OER courses which range from mostly access DIY style learning to open course with open teaching are free to access but there is no obvious way to receive credit for studying these various course materials. This lacuna has received not enough attention and there are few initiatives to address this issue. More recently, the open teaching efforts of David Wiley, (Wiley and Hilton, 2009) have stimulated thinking about how students in other countries could participate in higher education while overcoming the existing barriers to access.

Therefore, while the OCW movement has been active in providing extensive access to public knowledge, authorization for these courses is still strictly reduced due to the economic and geographical separation or English educational literacy limitations of the students. The replica proposed here effectively overcomes these limitations and English as an International Language Journal. Volume 5 2009 152 promotes English educational

literacy for students and faculty, in their chosen disciplines, through a pan university electronic forum that provides credit for online participation and collaboration from their home universities, while also providing for the professional educational growth using their English educational literacy for all faculty and student contributors.

The amalgamation of Universities

Most international students cannot attend important English speaking universities because they cannot satisfy the TOEFL or IELTS university entrance necessities or they lack the economic resources to pay for journey, education, rent and living expenses or they have families to support in their home cities, it was logical that these students could register in their home universities and participate in a pan-university online medium where they would read and write in asynchronous online discussion forums with similar students from other universal universities. In this way, because the online written communication is asynchronous, the force to execute and compete orally with native English speakers would be obviated. Conversely, having unlimited time to read and create questions and answers online would allow these EOL speakers the chance to express their highly precious insights and information to other participating members of the pan-university credit course. Accordingly, students from universities in Japan, Russia, Mexico and Canada for example could be registered in courses in their home universities and receive credit for the courses in their home university but would collaborate in written format with students and faculty from all three universities in a common online discussion forum on topics of common interest and choice (Carey, 2009, Basharina, 2007, Morgan and Carey, 2009)

There are numerous advantages to this approach. First, where the course content includes topics that are of global interest such as global warming and pandemics (Carey, 2009), unique viewpoints students' from each country can be very precious and enriching to the other students from the other countries and therefore, all students' viewpoints and opinions are highly valued by the other student participants. Furthermore, the course is

much more rich and educational for all participating students and faculty. For example, in discussing how business negotiations are conducted differently in Japan, Mexico, Russia and Canada can be enlightening when graduate students discuss assigned readings on this topic on this pan university online forum. I have taught numerous versions of this pan-university model where all faculty and student participants found it to be a much richer and enjoyable course due to the multicultural nature of the participants and where they could readily improve their English. English as an International Language Journal. Volume 5 2009 153 academic literacy in their academic discipline. Much of the research has centered on the superiority of these pan university courses over conventional courses. In particular, the instructors appreciated the fact that they could discuss issues online in educational English and this was viewed as a major opportunity to improve their educational English literacy in their educational discipline. Instructors noted that this opportunity was much better than going to a conference because each course provided for months of professional educational development.

Conclusion

In conclusion, all ethno linguistic groups universal need to expand their educational literacy in English to make sure their cooperative prestige in international educational, financial and cultural domains to ensure the maintenance, development, value and prestige of their own individual group ethno linguistic strength. While the achievement of educational literacy in English remains a challenge for professionals and academics universal, this paper has proposed that the advent English as an International Language Journal. Volume 5 2009 154 of Open Course Ware and the Public Knowledge movement are major steps forward to promoting universal access to world knowledge and, when combined with models such as the Open Pan-University Public Knowledge model proposed in this paper, offer creative new possibilities for achieving universal

educational literacy in English as a common world language for universal collaborative knowledge development.

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