

CHAPTER 19.

A CRITICAL REFLECTION ON A
THREE-PRONGED APPROACH
TO SECOND-LANGUAGE
ENHANCEMENT AT THE CHINESE
UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

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***Abstract.** In preparing university students for academic success and beyond, disciplinary literacy, the ability to understand and contextualize the use of language within a subject/discipline for academic purposes, is found to be a much needed yet easily neglected area in higher education. While content professors are mostly preoccupied with teaching subject knowledge, students are often unaware of their insufficient academic literacy for successful learning in the disciplines. To address these challenges, a language unit which plays a central role within a university's overall language enhancement program in Hong Kong has strived to create a collaborative community for enhancing disciplinary literacy across the university to bridge this gap and to facilitate student engagement. This chapter documents a critical reflection on the unit's endeavor in developing an integrated three-pronged approach to language education whereby all stakeholders—language educators, content professors, and students—are involved to bring about institutional change. In addition to outlining the formal core language curriculum, it analyses how a joint-force of change agents was formed through the launch of the English across the curriculum (EAC) Project, an institutional movement since 2016, as well as the inception and implementation of the peer tutoring scheme (PTS), a student-centered platform for enriching student experience. It also underscores the insights obtained from the process and discusses its way forward.*

In the past two decades or so, the challenges of English-medium higher education have received considerable attention in a wide range of settings, especially in Europe and the Asia-Pacific where English is used as a second or foreign language to teach academic or content subjects (Evans & Morrison, 2011; Fenton-Smith et al., 2017; Mahboob, 2014; Zhao & Dixon, 2017). Research has also been conducted to understand and address the complexity of the pedagogical and policy issues involved (Fenton-Smith et al., 2017; Galloway & Ruegg, 2020; Macaro et al., 2016; Lei & Hu, 2022). These concerted efforts reflect the exigency for English language educators and researchers to respond to the transforming landscape of higher education in which disciplinary literacy plays a pivotal role in ensuring student engagement and success where English medium instruction is adopted.

Disciplinary literacy refers to the ability to understand and contextualize the use of language within a subject/discipline for academic purposes. It emphasizes “the knowledge and abilities possessed by those who create, communicate, and use knowledge within the disciplines” (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012, p. 8.). This ability is found to be crucial yet easily neglected in higher education where English is used as the medium of instruction (Evans & Morrison, 2011; Mahboob, 2014; Pun & Jin, 2021; Zawacki & Cox, 2014). This is certainly true in Hong Kong and has become more pronounced with the territory-wide education reform in 2012 whereby secondary schooling was shortened from seven years to six. Due to the change, freshmen have one year less of advanced English training prior to entering university, resulting in a gap between what they can do and what they are expected to do (Lai et al., 2020).

Noting the complexity of the issues involved, language educators at the English Language Teaching Unit (ELTU) of CUHK have strived to bridge this gap by creating a collaborative community that engages language specialists, content teachers, and students using a flexible model to cater for diversity and to enhance student engagement, a crucial factor affecting student success (Coates, 2008; Kahu, 2013; Zepke & Leach, 2010). We firmly believe that unless there is an institutional culture that upholds inter-disciplinary collaborations and nurtures the importance of disciplinary literacies collectively, the problem of disconnect will remain, adversely affecting students’ overall success in and out of university. To forge this culture, a three-pronged approach has been adopted to address said challenge and enhance student engagement, a multi-faceted construct which primarily emphasizes students’ cognitive investment in, active participation in and emotional reactions to their learning tasks (Chapman, 2003) as well as “students’ involvement with activities and conditions likely to generate high quality learning” (Coates, 2008, p.vi).

To enhance student engagement, ELTU has developed a comprehensive formal curriculum since 2012 as the foundation (1st prong), which is complemented by two non-formal provisions, the English across the curriculum (EAC) movement (2nd prong) and the peer tutoring scheme (PTS) (3rd prong) since 2016. While the formal curriculum operates at the university level (graduation requirement for all undergraduates unless exempted), the EAC movement functions at a faculty/program/unit/course level through collaborative community-of-practice (CoP) projects (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015), and the PTS runs at an individual level through the support of trained peer tutors (Figure 19.1). We adopt CoP as the key implementation strategy for EAC due to its collaborative nature. It allows regular close contact and knowledge sharing between content and language teachers to address common goals (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). These provisions are necessarily needs-based, genre-specific, and learner-centered, with the common goal of maximizing student engagement. In this chapter, emphasis is placed on the EAC movement as it acts as a catalyst for the (re)development of the core courses and the adaptive implementation of PTS.

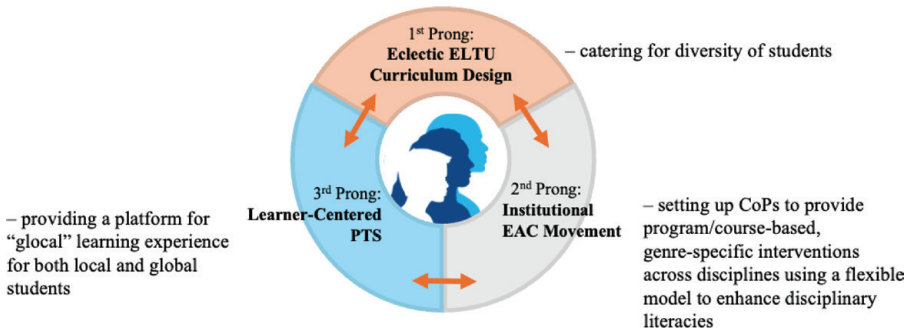


Figure 19.1. A three-pronged approach to second language enhancement at the Chinese University of Hong Kong

THE SETTING – THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG AND THE THREE-PRONGED APPROACH.

The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) is the only higher institution in Hong Kong that adopts a bilingual language policy whereby both English and Chinese are official languages (Lai et al., 2020; Lin & Man, 2011). Unless specified, students are free to choose their preferred language to complete assignments. With 90 percent of our undergraduates being local students, it is expected that they tend to opt for Chinese primarily if given the choice. It is thus not uncommon for both content teachers and students to neglect the gap.

FIRST PRONG: AN ECLECTIC ELTU CURRICULUM THAT ADDRESSES DIVERSITY

With the inception of the new curriculum in 2012 because of the territory-wide educational reform in Hong Kong, an eclectic curriculum structure that caters to the diverse needs of our undergraduates (~10,000 annually) was designed, progressing from general English for academic purposes (EAP) to English for specific purposes (ESP) and English for professional purposes (EPP) (Figure 19.2). To date, all the 50 courses on offer are closely monitored by our rigorous quality assurance mechanism and processes, which include insights and feedback gained from the two non-formal prongs in question, leading to course (re)development and expansion.

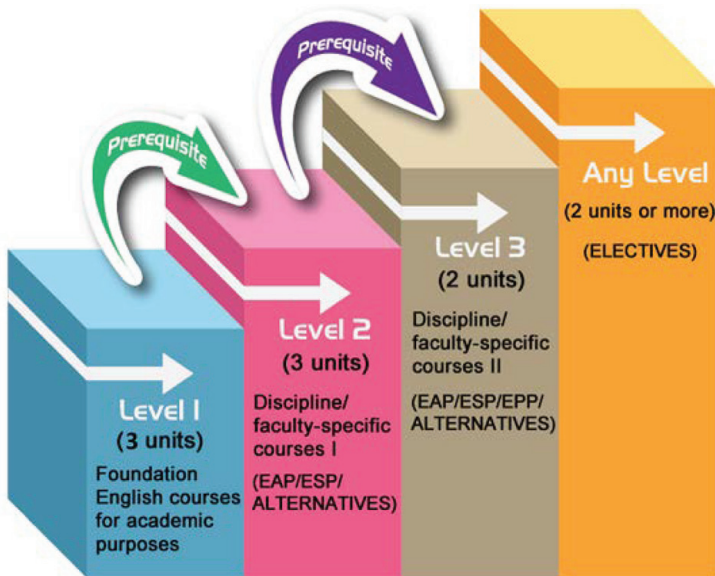


Figure 19.2. Formal ELTU curriculum structure

SECOND PRONG: EAC AS A CATALYTIC INSTITUTIONAL MOVEMENT AT CUHK.

The design and development of an eclectic/wide-ranging, faculty-based ELTU curriculum is in itself both a great challenge and accomplishment. Notwithstanding the effectiveness of this formal curriculum (average student course rating is around 5.4 out of 6.0 over time), due to student diversity, some faculty-based courses still cannot fully prepare students for genre-specific/disciplinary requirements necessitated by different academic departments/programs, resulting in a gap between what students are expected to do and what they are able to do,

particularly in writing, as reflected by content teachers. Informed by the writing across the curriculum (WAC) scholarship (Anson, 2002; Ferris & Thaiss, 2011; Wingate, 2016; Zawacki & Cox, 2011; Zawacki & Rogers, 2012), as well as its early practice of WAC at CUHK (Braine & McNaught, 2007) and in Asia (Wu, 2013), the Unit officially started launching the EAC movement in 2016 with government funding. Jose Lai et al. (2020) explain that

This initiative extends the WAC tradition and previous WAC implementations at CUHK, which exclusively focused on academic writing, to include all language modalities in an L2 setting, allowing English acquisition for students to proceed beyond traditional English as a second language (ESL) courses directly into their chosen disciplines. (p. 226)

To develop an institutional culture that involves inter-disciplinary collaborations, we have identified clear goals to guide our EAC movement: 1) to explore different academic literacies with content professors through establishing CoPs; 2) to support content teachers in implementing an assessment approach that encourages a dual attention to content and language; and 3) to cultivate a joint ownership of language education.

This movement is implemented by setting up inter-disciplinary CoP collaborative projects with content professors across the university using a flexible model which can accommodate diverse expectations and evolving changes to address a range of disciplinary needs. To date, our EAC movement has established 36 CoPs (many are repeat collaborations) with some 70 content teachers across the University (Figure 19.3), benefiting nearly 13,000 students.

Arts	Business Administration	Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Anthropology ▪ Cultural and Religious Studies ▪ Linguistics ▪ Music 	BA Programs: Workshops for Case Competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Early Childhood Education ▪ Sports Science and Physical Education
Engineering	Law	Medicine
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Biomedical Engineering ▪ Information Engineering ▪ Mechanical & Automation Engineering ▪ Systems Engineering and Engineering Management 	School of Law: Linked course <i>ELTU2015 English for Law Students</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Biomedical Sciences & Pharmacy ▪ Chinese Medicine ▪ Nursing ▪ Pharmacy, Nursing, Public Health, Chinese Medicine, Biomedical Sciences
Science	Social Science	Others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Earth and Environmental Sciences ▪ Natural Sciences ▪ Physics ▪ Statistics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Architecture ▪ Gender Studies ▪ Psychology ▪ Social Work ▪ Urban Studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ College Education ▪ University General Education

Figure 19.3. EAC collaborative projects

THIRD PRONG: PTS AS A PERSONALIZED SUPPORT TO ENRICH LANGUAGE LEARNING EXPERIENCE.

EAC is further strengthened by its extended arm, PTS. The idea of peer-tutoring was first incubated during the early years when the territory-wide education reform was implemented in 2012. This was prompted by our observation that freshmen were found quite disoriented with regard to academic literacy. This need was confirmed by our QA data and through our pilot trial of EAC in 2015–2016 with content professors. Students are found ill-informed of genre knowledge and features of scientific writing, for instance. Encouraged by the fact that peer-tutoring has been found effective as an instructional strategy in offering alternative provisions to students in a great variety of situations (Topping, 1996), our Unit was determined to extend the EAC initiative and further complement the formal curriculum by launching the student-centered PTS in 2016, which provides the platform for enriching student learning experience and enhancing student engagement (Kahu, 2013).

In brief, PTS aims to (1) recruit and train peer tutors of different academic and cultural backgrounds from different disciplines to provide personalized and student-centered language support to all CUHK students in enhancing tutees' general proficiency and disciplinary literacies; (2) support internationalization of CUHK and help integrate local and non-local students; and (3) offer a positive platform for the peer tutors to grow personally, socially, culturally, and professionally. To date, PTS has supported almost 1,300 students in over 5,200 one-hour sessions by nearly 250 trained peer tutors.

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS OF THE EAC AND PTS CORE TEAMS

With the challenges of bilingual language policy, student diversity, general disengagement in English learning, low awareness of the importance of disciplinary literacy, and weak ownership of language education by content teachers and students, we recognize the exigency of joining hands with all stakeholders concerned to provide holistic language education through an integrated approach. Reflecting on our experience of establishing EAC CoPs with content teachers across disciplines, and providing personalized support through PTS to complement our ELTU core curriculum, we realize the importance of the following.

1. CONDUCTING INITIAL AND ONGOING COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ANALYSIS

Experience from the first rounds of implementation alerted us that students across faculties often share a common concern—whether language teachers have

the proficiency in comprehending the technical content and providing constructive assistance to enhance their disciplinary literacies. The secret to fend off such skepticism lies in the thorough preparation work we invest in. Regardless of the model of intervention, the following cycle of implementation has been applied to ensure quality, consistency, and generalizability of practice. Conducting comprehensive needs analysis by working closely with content teachers marks the significant first step of starting any newly established CoP (Figure 19.4).

To this end, it is important that we obtain the necessary information by all means: soliciting course documents and expectations from content teachers, analyzing graded student samples for language issues, auditing lectures to note students' responses to subject content, and interviewing former course takers to gauge their challenges (which almost always include their fear of using English in academic/professional contexts) and coping mechanisms. Our goal is to acquire an in-depth understanding of their struggles and requests to provide them with relevant inputs that align with course expectations.

It is worth noting that needs analysis should be conducted in an ongoing manner throughout the project implementation process. Post-intervention survey feedback is often revealing. By deliberating with content teachers on students' voices, we make collective decisions to make modifications to our provisions, reflecting our flexible and evolving model. A recent successful cultural and religious studies CoP emphasizing writer-as-reader noted a strong request in the post-intervention survey for more training in academic reading. Similarly, in the case of the sports science and physical education CoP focusing on research writing, we were surprised but delighted to note during the interviews that students were eager to receive speaking support as well.

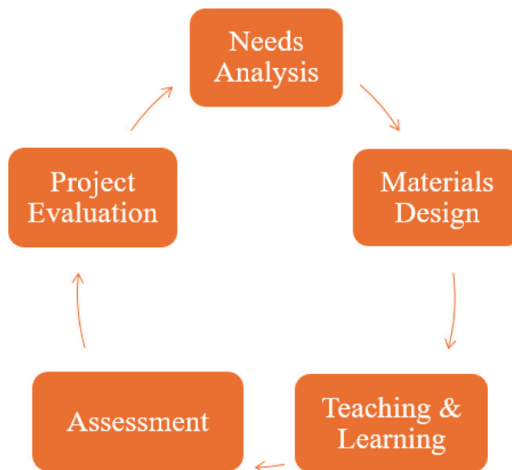


Figure 19.4. Implementation Cycle

With the support of the content teachers as outlined above, we can identify specific needs and address them step by step with prudence and sensitivity, including referring some students to consult our trained peer tutors. It is evident that both initial and ongoing needs analyses have enhanced student engagement and contributed to the implementation of a wide range of bespoke interventions for a diverse student body.

2. ADOPTING A FLEXIBLE MODEL TO PROVIDE BESPOKE INTERVENTIONS

Noting the wide range of disciplinary needs, we believe a flexible model, capable of accommodating diverse expectations and evolving changes, should be adopted to accomplish our goals. This belief is premised upon a strong advocate by WAC practitioners (Anson, 2002; Braine & McNaught, 2007) that any educational interventions or practices are always best developed with sensitivity towards unique contexts and exigencies. As one size cannot fit all, different forms of interventions emerged through thorough needs analyses as well as the regular interplays between the EAC team and our collaborator(s) (Figure 19.5).

These provisions often complement the existing ELTU curriculum by addressing areas of needs not covered by the formal courses, and they take different forms to provide bespoke interventions to our target groups. For instance, for Cultural and Religious Studies, we provide customized workshops to support students in writing a wide range of genres including academic abstracts, compare-and-contrast papers, and critical book reports. At the request of a professor from the creative industries course, we also train students' pitching skills for presenting funding proposals. For gender studies majors, we offer interactive training sessions on response essays about feminist theories. For psychology, we guide students to analyze and tackle various writing tasks in their mid-term and final assessments. For social work majors, we offer linked courses to equip them with case recordings and funding proposal writing skills needed to navigate through their fieldwork practicum. For natural sciences program majors, we provide onsite feedback on their poster presentations. Other offerings include professional development for teaching staff, discipline-specific eLearning platforms and tailored assessments such as graded quizzes.

In doing so, the team finds the importance of subscribing to a sound linguistic theory and pedagogical approach to implement our provisions. Drawing from functional linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004) and the genre-based approach to language development (Hyland, 2007; Swales & Feak, 2012; Wingate, 2012, 2016), most interventions are designed to draw students' attention to the distinctive linguistic features, functions, and purposive language use within a particular disciplinary context.

• Customised Workshops (on academic writing, pitching, presentation skills, etc.)	• Mobile App for FYPs	• Teaching and Learning Materials Development
• Linked Courses	• Invited Sessions	• Assessment Rubrics and Guidelines Development
• Guest Lectures	• Orientation Talks	• 1-on-1 Consultation Sessions
• Micro-modules	• Discussion Forums	• Professional Development Workshops for Teachers and Teaching Assistants (TAs)
• eLearning Platforms	• Competitions	

Figure 19.5.A Flexible EAC Model of Interventions.

The aim is to induct learners into these specific features and help them navigate the discourse in different disciplines effectively. For example, through the EAC project, we first understood the needs of different engineering departments, from which we received requests for support in final-year projects (including report writing and presentation skills). Since many departments sought similar support, we proposed a course, ELTU3024 Communicating Engineering Research, which specifically focuses on research writing and presentations for engineering students. This course takes a genre-based approach and uses engineering research papers from different fields as examples. Where appropriate, we also use authentic published works from the discipline concerned, including some written by the collaborating professors.

It is noteworthy that, rather than providing one-off support, the interventions often involve ongoing efforts. A case in point is our collaboration with the Department of Information Engineering where we support students and teaching assistants in developing communication skills for successful completion of research-based projects in their capstone project courses. We provide different forms of support based on the intended learning outcomes and assessments over two academic terms. We start with a briefing session where we introduce the assignment requirements and our interventions. Subsequently, students are provided access to online modules that focus on the research-related assignments to be completed. These are followed by workshops on selected topics and training for teaching assistants who help to assess and provide tailored feedback on students' work. While we work with numerous departments on capstone projects, our approaches differ based on the specific needs of each target group.

Our work has been successful due to the flexibility of our approach and the commitment of our collaborators who share common goals. Equally important is the provision of individualized peer feedback through the PTS. Many typical

L2 language issues, including both higher-order concerns and lower-order concerns, can be covered in depth by our trained peer-tutors, whose service has been extremely well received. As tutees' requests have to be submitted with their work at least two days in advance of the appointment, the peer tutors can often provide bespoke support at a personalized level.

3. BUILDING TRUST AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE AMONG STAKEHOLDERS

As a social learning theory, CoP considers learning in a social context among “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). This definition has outlined in clarity the three key and interconnected components of CoP: The Domain, The Community, and The Practice (Figure 19.6).

Translated into our EAC setting, CoP refers to the formation of a community (trusting relationship) between our team of English language educators and content professors/teachers across the disciplines to address a common goal (disciplinary literacies) with the aim of enhancing the practice (engagement of students to produce expected standard of work within the disciplines). It is this partnership and trust between our collaborators and the team that makes the delivery of relevant, discipline-specific language support possible.



Figure 19.6. Components of COP. The Domain refers to the shared goal collectively pursued by the Community who are bonded members engaging in joint activities and discussions to develop a shared Practice.

Given the highly specific nature of our collaborations, a decent understanding of the target disciplines and genres is necessary for the EAC instructors to teach disciplinary literacy to students. However, it takes time and specific effort. The CoP model allows us to address this by essentially learning from the subject experts in authentic situations through reading seminal papers and being with them. With our background in applied linguistics, we can conduct genre and language analysis for particular disciplines accordingly. For architectural studies, we meet with practicing architects as well as professional consultants from the Architecture School to solicit their input and feedback on our material design. We also sit in design review sessions to observe the interactions between visiting architects and students. For urban studies, we source and conduct textual analyses of published works on popular disciplinary topics authored by the content professors, who are also leading researchers in the field, and adapt selected works as samples for teaching. For social work, we invite external fieldwork supervisors to participate in a discussion forum to share their observations on students' performance during their practicum, based on which we then adjust the focus of our interventions. For physics, we audit the lectures of content professors to strengthen our science knowledge—while this is often a steep learning curve for language teachers without a science background, knowing what students are learning and why they are doing an experiment in a particular way help us give more effective feedback on their writing. This approach allows us to not only gain subject knowledge but also to better “speak the language” of the target discourse community, which in turn provides language teachers with many learning opportunities for professional development.

On the other hand, the practice of CoP has also allowed the EAC team to showcase the importance of disciplinary literacy for academic success and an assessment practice that focuses both on content and language. Through regular interactions, most collaborators have become more open to adjusting their course structure to accommodate EAC interventions. In some cases, they even modify their course delivery mode by embracing some WAC pedagogy, such as the writing-to-learn approach. All in all, this mutual respect and trust has not only lead our collaborators to assume a greater ownership of language education but also to become our EAC ambassadors. Many new CoPs are established through word-of-mouth, and the new collaborators are normally quite ready to adopt and adapt the practice of our early adopters.

4. ENHANCING LEARNING MOTIVATION WITH INCENTIVES AND PERSONALIZED PTS

Despite our thorough work on understanding students' needs and providing them with bespoke interventions, a notable challenge is observed across the

board concerning student participation in non-compulsory provisions. As Kathy Durkin and Andrew Main (2002) have suggested, these provisions often fail to attract students who need it the most. Despite perceiving our offerings as beneficial, as reflected in surveys, students often require extrinsic motivation to participate. Considerable efforts have been made with our collaborators to motivate students strategically.

Experience shows that when EAC interventions are tied to subject course assessments, students are more likely to take us seriously. To this end, we work hard at both our collaborators and students. In the first place, we need to convince content teachers to make these interventions compulsory and to include language marks in their assessment scheme to reflect a dual emphasis on content and language. To facilitate this change in assessment practice, we volunteer support in designing the assessment rubrics and training their teaching assistants in grading. When a complete overhaul of assessment scheme is impracticable, bonus marks will be given for participation. Identifying with our belief, the Department of Sports Science and Physical Education has made EAC interventions a compulsory assessed component in their Final-year Project (FYP) Handbook, giving us a rightful position in jointly advancing their students' learning. This policy change will also be adopted by the Early Childhood Education Program.

Another incentive is to let students experience the authenticity of language learning in context. For example, our EAC intervention for the architectural studies actually takes place during students' regular design studio presentations while both content professors and language teachers review and comment on their performance simultaneously. This practice has inarguably enhanced student engagement.

These incentives have worked, but the best incentive is to let students experience the practical values of our interventions. Students from the earth and environmental science program, on average, exhibit a much higher level of English proficiency compared with other science counterparts as many are aspiring research students-to-be. They tend to harbor doubts about our ability to guide them in their FYP research writing and regard our consultations an imposition on their time. To gain their trust, we interacted regularly with our collaborator, confirming our understanding of content knowledge raised in students' drafts, and maintaining constant communication to discuss student progress. This intense collaborative effort paid off. Students became motivated intrinsically by witnessing their own progress through our interventions. They were pleasantly surprised at the improvement made at this final yet crucial phase of their academic journey.

Students are further intrinsically incentivized by yet another level of learner-centered support made available through PTS. With the aim to supplement the formal ELTU curriculum and the EAC movement, PTS is implemented

with a clear mission to provide individualized language support to further address the needs of a diverse range of students. To yield synergy, PTS is seamlessly integrated into and promoted through our courses and EAC interventions though this service is open to all students on campus. Often at the recommendation of their teachers, students from ELTU courses and content courses will approach our peer tutors voluntarily with their work for personalized feedback. For special cases, we also match the peer tutees with suitable peer tutors. This learner-centered and stress-free learning platform has inarguably enhanced students' learning motivation and enhancement.

DISCUSSION

In pursuit of an inter-disciplinary collaborative community and excellence in language education, we have worked tirelessly towards an integrated three-pronged approach by complementing the well-established ELTU Curriculum (1st prong) with EAC (2nd prong) and PTS (3rd prong) since 2016, which has been increasingly well received. The positive post-intervention survey results reflect not only students' satisfaction of the provisions but also their uptake of learning, and indirectly, student engagement. There have been challenges and achievements along the way, and it is the synergy resulting from the seamless articulation of the three prongs in question that is worth celebrating.

First and foremost, the outcomes of our EAC movement have been more than pleasing. With a start-up number of eight CoPs in 2016–2017, our movement has successfully established 36 CoPs by reaching out to some 70 content professors/teachers/teaching assistants from all eight faculties and other units, benefitting nearly 13,000 students to date. We have been exploring a wide range of disciplinary literacies with content teachers collectively across the university (Figure 19.3); supporting them in their assessment practice by incorporating language marks in their assessments (notably faculties of arts, education and engineering); and cultivating joint ownership of language education through enacting CoPs collaboratively and reviewing our practice regularly. In reflection, we find vision, passion and mutual trust important drivers for our institutional movement to address students' disengagement in disciplinary literacy. Realizing that holistic language education should be a joint effort between content teachers and language specialists, we daringly set institutional change in the landscape of language education and enhanced student engagement as our goals. With this mission, we took a leap of faith by setting up inter-disciplinary CoP projects with content professors to co-create the necessary learning conditions for student engagement with mutual trust. We also adopt a flexible model to implement CoPs in a timely manner using authentic materials with empathy, tact,

and sensitivity for the learners. It is this flexible and evolving model that allows us to address issues of student diversity, institutional culture, and ownership of language education effectively.

Secondly, the outcomes of our effort in supporting individual students and enhancing students' "glocal" learning experience (Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2021) through PTS are equally worth noting. Starting off with 26 trained peer tutors in 2016, the demand for more comprehensive service has been on the rise. This learner-centered provision has become an indispensable and greatly welcome provision for the students in need. Since its inception, the number of sessions has soared to over 5,200, serving close to 1,300 tutees by 271 peer tutors on board. Amazingly, peer tutees' satisfaction of these sessions has been consistently high over time with nearly perfect attendance rate. What has set PTS up for success is probably its affordance of an exclusively needs-based, learner-centered, and flexible learning approach whereby the peer tutees are free to specify their learning needs, choice of peer tutors (self-introduction videos are available on the project site), and preferred learning mode (in-person, Zoom, or sheer written feedback) when they book a time slot for support. Besides, this scheme speaks to the minds and hearts of all concerned. The stress-free and supportive learning platform has created an ideal condition to foster learning relationships. While peer tutees feel they are fully supported to achieve their own learning goals, peer tutors find their satisfaction in service and personal development with enhanced self-confidence and self-image as indicated in the post-intervention surveys (often scoring well above 5 on a 6-point scale) and focus-group interviews (Arrand, 2014; Hammond et al., 2010). These intangible rewards have become an impetus for sustaining commitment from both parties.

Thirdly, both non-formal provisions have provided tremendous insights for formal curriculum review and reform. Suffice to say that review reports generated by the voluminous data obtained from different EAC and PTS interventions have inspired regular course revisions and expansion. Besides, linked courses for professional programs are constantly reviewed and revamped based on on-going discussions with content professors and the QA data. Students' specific needs identified through EAC and PTS have indeed provided the ELTU curriculum committee with much food for thought and actions. In this regard, the synergy generated by this integrated three-pronged approach cannot be underestimated. While our formal curriculum provides faculty-based academic skills training, the EAC CoPs allow us to address specific and evolving disciplinary needs in a timely manner. Whenever needed, personalized support is provided by our fleet of well-trained peer tutors. This way, students can be provided with holistic language support at all levels, which is coherently articulated under the same leadership within the same university.

CHALLENGES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Undoubtedly, we have encountered challenges along the way. For our EAC movement, besides the issues of students' participation in non-compulsory provisions, their skepticism about language instructors' ability to advise them on disciplinary work, and low-learning motivation, there are other situational problems. The challenge of sustainability resulting from the substantial turnover of staff within the Unit, which is reflective of the wider ELT job market in Hong Kong, poses a concern. Due to the highly specific nature of our collaborations, we have to invest much effort in grooming new EAC instructors by providing them with professional development opportunities. Besides immersing them in authentic learning situations, we also create eLearning resources, keep detailed records of previous lesson plans and reflective reports for their reference. Speaking of sustainability, we are grateful to note that this EAC movement has been awarded with an earmarked grant by the university since 2022–2023 based on merit. To provide professional development opportunities, we have also organized international forums and conferences to encourage scholarship.

As we look towards the future, we can also foresee more challenges. One of them is the growing interdisciplinary nature of different disciplines. This requires a broader knowledge base and the ability to support students in navigating complex interdisciplinary projects. The EAC team will need to continuously assess and revise the program and provisions (Cox et al., 2018). Furthermore, it is also worth considering how collaborators can assume even greater ownership of the EAC provisions. While significant strides have already been made in integrating EAC into the relevant subject courses, it is of interest to further encourage and empower content specialists to address students' academic literacy needs in their own teaching and to recognize the importance of literacy in curriculum and assessment design. The collaborative efforts of both content and language specialists are expected to further enhance the quality and sustainability of our initiatives.

As for PTS, our main challenge is to continuously provide an effective learning platform which will not only benefit both peer tutors and tutees in respective aspects, but will also respond well to changing needs. We believe our knowledge of students' needs obtained through formal course implementation and EAC interventions will allow the PTS team to provide more tailored training for the peer tutors to come. The foreseeable increase in non-local students and interdisciplinary programs of CUHK will bring new challenges for us. To address the increase in diversity of student body and program mix effectively, we recognize the need to purposively recruit potential candidates of diverse academic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds and to systematically prepare them for service through topic-based training workshops, e.g., peer-tutoring pedagogy,

genre-based pedagogy, academic and research writing, intercultural communication, presentation skills, and independent learning.

Despite the relative success of the PTS, our team is convinced that to further improve and sustain this meaningful practice, we need to take further action. We plan to further strengthen the connection between PTS and EAC by matching peer tutors with tutees within the same faculties or even departments. We will also empower our peer tutors with more systematic training and monitoring. In addition to the review of service quality, more time and manpower could be allocated to exploring how peer tutees transfer their language skills acquired from peer tutoring to other academic settings. Last but not least, peer tutors should be encouraged to reflect systematically on their own gains through the process. Only through their realizations on “learning by teaching” in peer tutoring (Topping, 1996, p. 324) can they become more intrinsically motivated to provide quality service. We truly believe that the purposive selection, thorough preparation, and on-going monitoring of these highly motivated peer tutors are fundamental and yet instrumental to motivating student engagement.

CONCLUSION

Through the three-pronged approach, we have attempted to develop an integrated framework of holistic language education to maximize student engagement at a system level. Perhaps it is not an exaggeration to say that the EAC movement is the catalyst for change, informing both the curriculum development and the effective implementation of PTS, and more importantly, effecting an institutional change in the landscape of second language education. As Vicki Trowler and Paul Trowler (2010) put it, responsibility for engagement is a shared entity, requiring the agency of the individual student, the role of the institution, teaching staff, and all support staff.

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