

From the Editor-in-Chief June 2014

Dear colleagues and readers

Welcome to edition 11, 2 of the Asia Journal of TEFL.

In this issue we publish five articles, the first two of which are connected with the role of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in higher education.

Eun Gyong Kim reports on an intriguing study into the attitudes of Korean professors of engineering towards EMI. The author surveyed by questionnaire 48 professors of engineering. The results indicated that although the professors recognised that both many of the students and many of their own body needed to develop their English proficiency in order to enhance the efficacy of EMI courses, many were not in favour of such extra classes to achieve this. This may be because the professors themselves disapprove of the EMI policy and would suggest the need for follow-up studies to test this hypothesis. The second study into the use EMI in higher education was conducted by Inyoung Kym and Moon Hyun Kym. They investigated students' perceptions and attitudes towards EMI, surveying 364 students across 11 disciplines. They conclude that the variables which influenced the students' attitudes to EMI were their background knowledge in the subject, whether they had had the opportunity to study overseas and whether their professors were native speakers of English or not. They conclude that it is essential for students to have English language support and a high enough level of English proficiency if they are to benefit from EMI courses.

The other three articles in this issue focus on more traditional aspects of English language teaching.

In an empirical study which investigated the comparative effectiveness of the process and genre approaches to the teaching of argumentative writing, Trinh Quoc Lap and Nguyen Thanh Truc, analysed the progress of two groups of students. They concluded that the genre-based approach was particularly effective in terms of the following four features: awareness of the audience and the purpose of the text; the content of the text; the organization of the text; and language use. They also reported that the genre-based approach helped the students feel far more confident in their ability to write argumentative texts. From these results, the authors drew a number of implications, including the need for writing instructors to be highly supportive of their students.

Akiko Nagao conducted a study to see how a Japanese student of English in an Australian university adopted strategies to ensure that she became a member of the 'community of practice', both in the classroom and outside, in order to enhance her ability to learn English. The researcher followed the student over a period of time and conducted a number of interviews with her and asked her to complete a reflective journal. She concludes that it is essential that the importance of being part of a community of practice for successful learning is understood and that teachers and other members of the community need to work to ensure that learners feel part of a community of practice.

In a study which investigated the relative benefit that the use of certain vocabulary memory tools had on increasing the size of learners' vocabulary, Kyoung Rang Lee and Soonil Kwon compared 'self-regulated' learners and 'other-regulated' learners.

In particular they compared the effectiveness of the use of a self-regulated tool and an other-regulated tool for each group of learners, hypothesising that self-regulated learners would prefer and perform better with the self-regulated tool, while the other-regulated learners would prefer and perform better with the other-regulated tool. To their surprise, they found that the other-regulated learners performed better with the self-regulating tool than with the other-regulating tool, but that the self-regulating tool was the more effective for both sets of learners.

As can be seen from the first two articles in this issue, the role of English as a medium of instruction in higher education across the region is becoming something of a hot topic. We would therefore welcome further empirical studies on this issue together with comparative studies of the use of EMI in different settings across the region.

Australia, June 2014
Andy Kirkpatrick
Editor-in-Chief