

Developing College Students' Global Competency through an EMI Service Learning Course

Wenli Tsou, Professor
National Cheng Kung University, Taiwan
wtsou@mail.ncku.edu.tw

In the age of globalization, preparing globally competent students is one of the main goals in higher education. In Taiwan, English language education has been narrowly viewed as synonymous to internationalizing higher education, while English benchmarking required for obtaining a college degree is exclusively determined by proficiency test scores. This approach has limited the perceptions of college learners towards global competency, and narrowed the scope of college English education.

The recent focus on global competence development has affected the university's language policy and course offering. Recognizing disciplinary specificity, National Cheng Kung University (NCKU) has removed the mandatory proficiency test graduation requirement in favor of requesting each academic college and department to develop guidelines and establish their own exit requirement for language. For instance, students could receive credits for attending either ESP (offered by the Language Center) or EMI (by their academic departments) courses.

To foster students' global competency, NCKU launched an EMI course that incorporates service learning in the English language education. Attended by both Taiwanese and international students, this innovative course created a natural environment where students used English in classroom interaction, and in learning pedagogical theories. The students received training in principles of English teaching during the first half of the semester, and then were sent to a remote indigenous community in southern Taiwan to teach children. During the last part of the course, the class worked with college students from Hong Kong Polytechnic University. In this course, situating English learning in service learning and international cooperation has helped college students gain insight into how the English language constitutes a necessary skill for the 21st Century if they wish to know something of and engage the world.

Wenli Tsou is a Full Professor in the Department of Foreign Languages & Literature, National Cheng Kung University, Taiwan. She received her PhD in Foreign and Second Language Education from the State University of New York at Buffalo, US. She is the project leader of the National Cheng Kung University ESP program. Her research interests include teacher training, ESP, English as a Lingua Franca, and English as a Medium of Instruction.