



Language Dimensions Across the Curriculum: Content and Language Integrated Learning

Professor Helmut Vollmer
University of Hamburg, Germany

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12:45 – 14:00
Room 205, Runme Shaw Building, HKU
(Chair: Dr Yuen Yi Lo)



Abstract

The acquisition and manipulation of subject-matter knowledge requires an awareness and a sensitization for the language carrying that knowledge as much as for the cognitive structures underlying it, namely the understanding and expression of knowledge as well as the negotiation of it inside and outside the classroom. In particular, the mastery of the language of schooling and of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) as one of its core elements are vital conditions for school success and for participation in the disciplinary discourse as well as in life. One important question to ask will be: What exactly are the language dimensions and the challenges in subject-matter education and how can we teach them, how can we accompany and assess their progress?

In my presentation, I will outline of a theoretical framework for describing these cognitive-linguistic challenges and demands that a CLIL learner and his/her teacher face and have to master in acquiring and teaching subject-matter knowledge and procedures. I will present some illustrative examples and learning tasks taken from a bilingual geography test (German/English) which can be analyzed and assessed by the participants of this seminar, at least on a holistic scale. Based on some students' responses we might go into more detail and sketch some specific forms of measurement within a comparative bilingual/monolingual research setting. For classroom use, simpler forms of qualitative evaluation in the mastery of the language of schooling, especially in handling cognitive discourse function (CDFs) are necessary.

About the speaker

Professor Helmut Johannes Vollmer is Guest Professor at the University of Hamburg within the Faculty of Education, specialized in bilingual education, pluri- and multilingualism, language-sensitive teaching and identifying (language) teacher competences. He has published widely in Germany and in North America (220+ publications), mainly in the areas of English as a Foreign/Second Language, Language Acquisition, Content and Language Integration (CLIL), Language in and across all subjects/Academic Language Proficiency. His recent books deal with the Language Dimensions in content teaching/learning (2013, 2015) and with the study and comparison of different subject didactics (2017, upcoming). The latest article will appear in a Swiss journal (*BzL online*), focusing on Cognitive Discourse Functions as the basis for structuring knowledge in all content areas.

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For enquiries, please contact the Office of Research, Faculty of Education, HKU at 3917 8254.