Action Research for EMI teacher development
Lecture Transcript by Jim McKinley

Hi, I'm Jim McKinley from University College London, talking with you about EMI teacher development through conducting research. In this second of three videos, I'll be talking about action research for EMI teacher development.

To define action research, Wallace explains that action research can have a specific and immediate outcome which can be directly related to practice in the teacher's own context, and it's an extension of the normal reflective practice of many teachers,but it is slightly more rigorous and might conceivably lead to more effective outcomes.

I'm going to draw on the work again of Tom Farrell in 2020, referring to a cycle of planning that he describes in his own work in 2018. So engaging in action research generally involves teachers entering this cycle of planning that involves observing, reflecting and acting on a problem in order to improve practice.

So each step in turn step One, decide the focus of the topic of interest based on your own observations. Step Two, read some background literature on the topic to help identify the problem. Step Three plan and decide on a strategy to collect data. Step Four, analyze and reflect on the data and make a data driven decision to take some action. And step Five, monitor the effects of that action and if necessary, redefine the original problem in light of the findings.

As an example, I'm going to draw on the work of Cao and Yuan in 2020. This is an action research study that came out of a larger study conducted by Ru Yuan in 2019, where he worked with business EMI teachers in Taiwan. One of those teachers is Cao, and Cao wrote this paper with Yuan describing this action research project that she conducted herself.

So step one based on Cao's observations,she said, According to my own observation and students post course evaluation, many students expressed a sense of frustration about their classroom participation and course assignment. She also understood that the use of English largely hindered their understanding of the content.

In step Two, reading some background literature, she drew on the work of Chen and Peng,who explained that university students often lack sufficient English proficiency to engage with content learning and participate in activities in EMI classrooms. She also drew on the work of Maxwell Reid 2017, who explained the relationship between language and content learning is important because the learning of disciplinary knowledge is integrated with the learning of language as a semiotic resource in specific fields.This helped her to identify the problem, which is students limited English proficiency and low learning motivation.

For step Three, this EMI teacher decided to design and implement an action plan to change the ways she thought about EMI. What she did was engage in ongoing data collection through weekly journal writing, critical discussion with colleagues, including the second author, as well as interviews with her students before and after the course.

For Step four, data were reviewed and analyzed following an inductive approach to help monitor, revise and improve her teaching actions. In the analysis of the interview data, she found that students held conservative attitudes about EMI due to their limited language proficiency or struggling experiences in previous EMI courses. On reflection, she decided to

act to promote students learning motivation and participation with concrete strategies such as allowing code switching and providing more local cases and examples in the course.

For step five in terms of how to address students cognitive and emotional needs, she decided to adopt a flexible language policy. And a new action was when introducing a business concept, she would demonstrate two different videos, one in English and one in Chinese as examples so that students could activate their previous knowledge, make comparisons and draw on different sources of information to enhance their content learning. Another new action was to occasionally use Chinese to explain different terms. Students were allowed to conduct code switching and group discussion to stimulate their interest and participation. In terms of redefining the problem, she decided to vary the use of English in class activities and watch it increase with the growth of student self confidence.

So to review step one, observe and decide the topic. Step two, read literature and identify the problem. Step three, collect the data. Step four, analyze, reflect and act. And step five, monitor the effects and maybe redefine. To conclude this video, the idea here from Sowa 2009 is to become an agent of change. Sowa says conducting action research projects helps teachers to start reflecting more critically about their practice, particularly with respect to strategies they teach in the classroom to help all students learn you. Here are the references for this video andI'll see you in the next video.

References

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