

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Improving English Language skills

Dr Jacqueline D'warte of the School of Educational is investigating how teachers can create opportunities for students to reveal the language and literacy skills they possess and how to harness these for classroom learning. This project is funded by the Department of Education and Communities (DEC), New South Wales through its Multicultural Programs Unit.

'Australia is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse nations in the world,' explains Dr D'warte. 'This diversity is embedded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies and enhanced by the arrival of people from over 200 countries from around the world. Although current NSW high school English curriculum documents acknowledge this diversity and ask teachers to recognize and build upon the skills that students display outside school, this can be a vast challenge for many teachers. This project involves teachers and students studying their everyday language practices and experiences and applying those understandings to the English demands of school'.

Data will be collected from 105 students aged 10-12 years and 9 teachers in 4 western Sydney schools. Interviews are being conducted with students and teachers. Curriculum materials and student work samples are being collected along with audio recordings and field notes from classroom observations. Teachers are also developing and trialling lessons and activities that link to National English Curriculum outcomes. These lessons are specifically designed to leverage students' language skills and experiences for classroom learning.



This pilot project is investigating a previously under-researched field where students' use of language to successfully fulfil social needs can be harnessed to address academic needs. This project will contribute to new understandings that can support all students in further developing their English language and literacy. It also aims to provide the background for a larger scale project.

Project Title: Reconceptualising Australian English Learners Language and Literacy Skills, Practices and Experiences

Funding has been set at: \$30,015

Contact Details: j.d'warte@uws.edu.au

April 2014