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The ExIST Project: EAP Across the Curriculum

This presentation argues that EAP techniques should not be limited to pre-sessional and in-sessional support, but can be integrated into university seminars in order to encourage the critical engagement of all students. The presentation details the ExIST (Excellence in International Student Teaching) project at Nottingham Trent International College, which encouraged tutors teaching academic subjects to international students to use an EAP-influenced approach.

University seminars offer space for students to process concepts, try out ideas and learn collaboratively. However, linguistic and cultural barriers may hinder international students' participation (Leki 2001; Brown 2008), leading to reduced critical engagement and poorer performance overall. This presentation discusses a project carried out at Nottingham Trent International College in 2011-12 which addressed this problem. The ExIST project brought together EAP and academic subject tutors to share strategies for fostering student engagement in seminars. EAP-style teaching strategies were found to transfer particularly well to subject seminars as both frequently involve group work and active participation.

The presentation expounds the project's three components: introductory workshops, subject-specific workshops and peer mentoring. Introductory workshops introduced the FLUTE strategy, a five-step, EAP-influenced style of lesson planning aimed at reducing linguistic and cultural barriers to student engagement. These were followed by subject-specific workshops, in which participants applied the FLUTE strategy to seminar materials from subjects such as Business, Law and Computing. Alongside these activities, a peer mentoring system paired subject tutors with EAP tutors in order to encourage further collaboration.

Among the project's reported outcomes were increased tutor confidence in teaching international students, and improved student engagement in seminars. Since ExIST strategies represent good pedagogical practice, it is argued that selected use of EAP techniques in seminars can benefit tutors, international students and home students.