



Book Review

M.L. Jirapa Abhakorn, (2025). *Using English to Teach Content: A Practical Guide for Non-Native Teachers*. PE 1128.A2 J566 2025. NIDACIP

By Phyu Phyu Win

Graduate School of Language and Communication, National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA), Thailand

Using English to Teach Content is a practical guide for non-native English-speaking teachers who teach academic subjects in English. The book contributes to the fields of English Medium Instruction (EMI) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), offering a step-by-step framework for developing teacher communication, lesson planning, and language support in multilingual classrooms. It is particularly relevant in Asian educational contexts, where teachers are expected to use English as the medium of instruction despite not being native speakers.

The first chapter, *The Social Perspective of Learning*, emphasizes the role of social interaction and oral communication in the learning process. Drawing on Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, scaffolding is described as the support children receive from adults, while the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) refers to the difference between what a child can do independently and with guidance. Mariani (1997) identified four classroom learning zones: (1) Learning/Engagement, (2) Frustration/Anxiety, (3) Comfort, and (4) Boredom. Of these, the learning engagement zone is the most effective for student learning.

The second chapter, *The Role of the Teacher to Engage Students in Learning*, highlights the importance of ensuring all students are actively involved through student-centered and inclusive methods. It identifies three principles: (1) noticing students' needs and participation, (2) building self-esteem through positive, respectful relationships, and (3) using flexible, diverse teaching methods. The chapter also presents strategies such as setting high expectations and allowing students to choose some learning activities. A key strength is its focus on inclusiveness, equity, and student-centeredness.

Chapter Three, *Teacher Talk and Student Learning*, reinforces the importance of teacher talk and advocates a dialogic approach that promotes extended student responses, moving beyond the traditional Initiation-Response-Evaluation/Feedback (IRE/IRF) model. Useful strategies include asking display and referential questions, giving more thinking time, encouraging longer student responses, scaffolding, and

employing techniques such as *Message Abundance*—using gestures, visuals, and verbal prompts to support comprehension in EMI classrooms.

Chapter Four, *English Language for Teaching*, outlines three essential types of English in EMI academic contexts: Basic Interpersonal Communication Language Skills (BICS), Classroom Language (CL), and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). While BICS refers to everyday conversational skills, CL supports classroom management and instructions, and, CALP enables understanding of complex grammar and expressions. Overall, this chapter emphasizes that fluency in BICS does not guarantee mastery of CALP.

Chapter Five, *Planning English Language Support for Content Lessons*, underscores the significance of structured language support in EMI classrooms. It emphasizes comprehensible input, stretched language use, awareness of linguistic limitations, and modelling academic language. The chapter also stresses the importance of formative assessment to track language growth through targeted vocabulary and grammar.

Chapter Six, *Creating English Conversation Prompts*, demonstrates how prompts can foster classroom discussions, problem-solving, collaboration, and real-life preparation. Effective prompts can be drawn from personal experiences, case studies, or questions progressing from simple to complex. They can also encourage thinking skills such as evaluating importance, interpreting themes, and making references.

Chapter Seven, *Designing and Implementing Conversation Tasks*, describes features of productive tasks, such as ensuring participation at appropriate levels and encouraging critical and creative thinking. The chapter also highlights the importance of teaching students to accept disagreements, negotiate conflicts, clarify ambiguity, and apply knowledge in real-world situations. Strategies such as simplifying texts and adding visual aids are also discussed.

Chapter Eight, *Teachers' Academic English Development*, provides practical guidance for non-native EMI teachers to improve their proficiency. It recommends avoiding colloquial expressions, run-on sentences, redundant words, and gender-specific terms. Exercises focus on transforming informal sentences into academic style through nominalization and hedging. Self-assessment tools and case studies are suggested to build confidence and proficiency.

Chapter Nine, *Teachers' English Vocabulary and Grammar Development*, suggests strategies for improving academic vocabulary and grammar. These include using high-frequency academic words, mastering sentence structures (simple,

compound, complex, and compound-complex), employing transition markers, and hedging to express caution.

The final chapter, *Teachers' English Discourse Skills Development*, explores the importance of both spoken and written discourse in instructional communication contexts. To develop writing skills, teachers are encouraged to craft clear topic sentences and use cohesive devices to connect ideas. For spoken discourse, they are advised to ask questions, provide prompts, and use idea-building activities such as using graphic organizers. The chapter also notes the importance of managing controversial discussions appropriately.

Overall, this book offers a practical and valuable resource for non-native teachers using English as a medium of instruction. It addresses oral communication, inclusive teaching, teacher talk, and teachers' professional language development. I recommend it to educators and teacher trainees seeking to design communicative tasks, enhance student engagement, and improve their own English proficiency and classroom communication skills.

About the Reviewer

Phyu Phyu Win is pursuing a Master of Arts in English Language Studies and Teaching at the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA), Thailand. Her research focuses on "Exploring EFL Teachers' Needs for Professional Development to Enhance Teaching Effectiveness in Monastic Schools in Myanmar." She has experience in teaching English and providing extra-curricular learning support for young learners. She is interested in teacher professional growth, curriculum design, and student-centered instruction. She also enjoys reading educational literature and writing book reviews to share insights with other educators.