

Endorsing cultural relevance whilst scaffolding academic literacies in a particular English for Pharmacy course

A B S T R A C T In this article, the writer investigates the experience of a group of learners who were given academic language support in the context of a topic that was culturally relevant to them. These multicultural learners were registered for their first year of study for a South African Pharmacy degree. The scaffolding of reading and writing texts on the topic of traditional healing systems was included in the English for Pharmacy course, although this was not a topic covered in any of learners' content subjects. Supported deconstruction as well as reconstruction of texts about the indigenous healing therapies of Africa and China, for example, was included in the English course, with the aim of facilitating learner access to and success in the mastery of scientific textual conventions. The learners of the case study brought individual cultural identities to a higher educational environment that often did not acknowledge diverse cultural roots. Thus, a culturally relevant topic was included in the English learning situation to motivate the learners in the negotiation of meaning via scientific language patterns that were appropriate to the context of their pharmacy studies. The learners were supported in the negotiation of culturally familiar meaning via complex English textual patterns that were also used in degree specific subjects such as: Pharmacology, Pharmacy Practice and Anatomy and Physiology. The research described in this article followed a phenomenological approach that entailed qualitative data collected from the learners who wrote reflection papers, took part in informal interviews and wrote a scientific report on the topic of traditional healing.

Introduction

The writer explores the experience of a group of thirty three first year Pharmacy degree learners, who were supported in learning English textual patterns in the context of information rooted in their traditional cultures, such as those of Africa or China. Although, these learners were

expected to master subject-specific English in the context of Pharmacy degree subjects such as Pharmacology, Pharmacy Practice, Anatomy and Physiology, they experienced a cultural gap between the academic milieu and their cultural roots, which undermined their confidence in manipulating the language of learning. To address this problem, the English for Pharmacy course followed Vygotsky's (1981) socio-cultural learning model by including learner cultural identity in a subject-specific language learning situation. Thus, traditional healing systems became the topic of texts resourced and read for information for a written research report. In doing the assignment, the learners were expected to adhere to textual conventions that genre theorists Rose (2008) and Hyland (2003) maintain should be salient to the cognitive reality of particular learning areas.

By resourcing texts on traditional healing systems for reading and writing tasks, the language course acknowledged prior learning and cultural identity, with the aim of motivating the learners in their use of scientific English language patterns. The language teacher facilitated learner negotiation of texts on traditional medicine gathered from books, articles, brochures and notes made during interviews with individuals, such as traditional healers. The learners were then supported in the deconstruction and reconstruction of the texts, until each learner produced a final written report on the indigenous topic.

Learner experience of the English for Pharmacy language intervention, in the context of culturally relevant information, was viewed as a research phenomenon that the writer attempted to systematically analyse into themes and sub-themes. The aim of the data analysis was to draw conclusions about a particular learner-centred language learning occurrence that involved the teaching of scientific language patterns of genre, register, discourse semantics and lexicogrammar.

To arrive at insights into the learners' experience of resourcing culturally appropriate information during the language learning tasks, the writer collected data provided by written reflections and comments made during unstructured interviews with the learners. The learners' final written assignments were also examined to understand their experience of using academically salient English textual patterns.

Background to the research

Although the learners of this case study were expected to access globally relevant texts in their content subjects, they were given the opportunity to negotiate texts appropriate to their individual cultures during the English for Pharmacy course. Thus, the course acknowledged cultural identity by including what Macdonald (1990: 72) describes as Vygotsky's "promotion of learner involvement in the guided discovery of the classroom". The English learning model described in this article was based on Vygotsky's model of learning where three factors were integrated: the educator's provision of supported learning tasks; learner identity brought to the learning situation; and the cognitive reality accessed (Vygotsky 1981:163).

The course aimed at facilitating learner mastery of language in a learning space that Vygotsky (1978:30) calls the *zone of proximal development* where all factors converge: the learner (intrinsic generative mechanism); the teacher's provision of supported language learning tasks (extrinsic generative mechanism); and the language to be learnt (the cognitive reality accessed).

The concepts that the learners of the case study were accessing were those of scientific textual conventions, taught in the context of individual cultural identity that Fataar (2005:42) refers to as “the learner’s sense of self acquired in the socialization context of family and/ or traditional communal life and early school experiences”.

In the case of many of the learners of the study, cultural and academic identity differed with regard to the information accessed in their content courses. Moreover, according to Gravett and Geysler (2004:70), academic language involves particular textual conventions ‘integral to disciplinary knowledge’. Thus, the English for Pharmacy course facilitated the learning of scientifically salient language patterns by allowing the learners to first express concepts originating in the learners’ primary culture. These concepts involved traditional healing therapies, as opposed to the pharmacy-related therapies studied in the content courses of the Pharmacy degree. As Gergen (2006) maintains, a learner’s attempts to explore culturally-rooted concepts in English may provide a bridge over the cultural divide and facilitate the language learning task.

In 1994, the South African government’s Reconstruction and Development Programme (2005:1) issued its *White Paper on Science and Technology* that consigned education to a science curriculum, with English as the language of instruction (Seleone, 2005:6; Güles, 2004:10). Yet, the primary language of 91 % of learners in South Africa is not English, which is the language of learning in most institutions (North-West University, 2004:3). Moreover, these learners are expected to cope with scientific English together with the concepts it houses. In addition, they may lack what King, Hicks, Krull and Del Gaiso (2006) term *positive affect*, which results from a perception of the meaningfulness of a learning task. According to King *et al.*, research amongst higher education learners has shown that attribution of meaning and positive feelings lead to motivation to succeed. Thus, the language support course experienced by the learners of this study aimed to scaffold positive affect as well as motivation to learn language by endorsing cultural identity.

In South Africa, many higher education learners need support in understanding lecturers, reading, writing and talking about their content subjects in English. As Rose (1997; 2004) and Hyland (1999) point out, these learners may have basic interpersonal English language skills, but need to be taught to conceptualize via subject-specific academic language, such as the scientific language used in Pharmacy degree courses.

Cummins (1980:157-187) compares basic interpersonal communication skills to the cognitively acquired language proficiency that is required to successfully access the concepts of discipline specific discourse at higher education level. The English for Pharmacy course experienced by the learners of the study facilitated access to academic language by bridging what Machingura and Mutemeri (2004:3), term the “great (cultural) divide (that) exists between the home and the school”. According to Pandor (2008), learner success at high school level in content subjects like Biology is often due to rote learning of the text book written in English, without authentic mastery of the language that communicates the scientific concepts. Thus, as Le Grange (2004:2) and Gumede & Gumede (2005:10) maintain, the learning of knowledge in English needs to be facilitated by acknowledging the traditional information that learners bring to the learning situation.

Fakudze (2005) and Naidoo (2004) also support the notion of learning to communicate in scientific language in a traditional social-cultural environment, as this facilitates culturally diverse learners' meaningful communication of complex language patterns that Rose (1998:18) calls 'higher rank language patterns'. These language forms are lexically dense (many concepts expressed in one sentence) and involve types of communication not usually used in everyday conversational 'lower rank' language (Rose, 1998:18). According to Cummins and Swain (1986:159), subject-specific language is 'cognitively demanding' and therefore, needs to be taught to learners in a meaningful context (Gravett & Geysler, 2004:70).

Zequan (2005), Pérez (2004) and Kilfoil (1999) promote the facilitation of learner clarification of information via the intricacies of subject-specific language that, according to the Australian Systemic Functional Theory of Language, starts with the meaning of the textual patterns that are perceived as functional or meaningful systems of communication (Rose, 1998:236; Halliday, 1994:350-352). In the context of the case study, the teacher encouraged the use of culturally meaningful texts to facilitate the learners' management of functional language patterns.

The supported language learning tasks on the topic of traditional healing systems, involved language patterns that according to Pérez (2004:8-9), need to be appropriate to the communication of complex concepts. Biber, Conrad, Reppen, Byrd, Helt, Clark, Cortes, Csomay & Urzua (2004:37-50) describe the scientific language patterns that learners, like the students of this study, are expected to use. Examples of these patterns are: agentless passives; third person usage; nominalization; and lexical density.

Although the scientific language corpora identified by Biber *et al* (2004) are syntactically subject-specific, Rose (2008) maintains that textual conventions should include other strata in addition to that of grammar and vocabulary. Rose (2008) and Graney (2005) describe the complexity of contextualized language in terms of: genre (types of text); register (styles of communication); discourse semantics (stages of meaning) and lexicogrammar (words/ word groups).

The particular genre used in the learners' assignments was the descriptive report, which involves classification and detailed descriptions. One assignment on African Herbal Medicine entailed the classification of the topic into roots, on the one hand, and leaves, on the other. The register of subject-specific language tasks on the topic of indigenous knowledge involved the factors of what Rose (2008) terms field, tenor and mode. The field was the actual learning area of the communication, such as African herbal medicine. The tenor was the relationship between the participants in scientific language communication. This was, for example, formal in the case of a descriptive report on Chinese Acupuncture. Zequan (2005:6) describes mode as the type of language code used, such as that of a written report completed on the topic of Boere Raad remedies. Another mode would be the oral presentation that was not assigned to the learners of the study.

Rose (2008) views discourse semantics as the layers of meaning within paragraphs that convey messages in topic and supporting sentences. An example of the discourse semantics in a paragraph about traditional African methods of treating headaches, involved an opening sentence on the different types of treatments for headaches, followed by sentences elaborating each type of therapy. According to Rose (2008), learners need strong support in deconstructing the meaning strata that need to be reconstructed in the learners' own words.

At sentence level, learners also need support in the deconstruction and reconstruction of lexicogrammar conventions of subject-specific terminology and word group patterns. Thus, in the case of the study, the teacher attempted to ‘systematically deconstruct the complexity’ of subject-specific textual patterns at all levels, to support learners in the practice of ‘each component in turn, but always starting with meaning’ (Rose 2004: 11).

Research project

To determine how the incorporation of culturally relevant texts into English for Pharmacy was experienced by the learners of the study, qualitative research was conducted amongst thirty three first year Pharmacy learners at a South African university. The group consisted of learners who had traditional African, Eastern and Middle Eastern backgrounds. The research involved a phenomenological approach that Cresswell (2005) and Lazaraton (1995) maintain endeavours to objectively understand the phenomenon of learner experience in socio-cultural contexts. Thus, the research followed a qualitative methodology, as it did not depend on the gathering of numerical data. According to McMillan and Schumacher (1998), qualitative data collection is a form of inquiry that attempts to discover the meaning of individuals’ behaviour, feelings and thoughts.

The research was based on: written reflections; unstructured group interviews; and the final written assignments. To gather the data, learners were asked to write a reflection paper in response to following question: *How did you experience using culturally relevant texts as a resource for an English written assignment?* The same question was asked at the beginning of unstructured group interviews.

Tesch (1990: 115, 139) and Cresswell (1998:235-237) explain how a research framework can make use of meaning making units for description. To collect data, researchers use techniques such as interviews, as well as open-ended questions, to arrive at objective insights into the participants’ experience. Analysis of data begins with regarding every element as having equal value and then, the meaning units are clustered into themes and sub-themes to describe the phenomenon (Myers 2004:245; Ely *et al*, 1999:162-163). In the case of the study, the final written assignments were also scrutinized with a view to discovering layers of meaningful observation of learner experience.

Analysis of data

After sifting through the reflections, studying the final written essays and noting comments made by the learners during the informal interviews, the writer identified four general themes. The first theme was that the learners found the language learning situation meaningful. This theme was broken down into two sub-themes: familiarity with the context of the textual resources; and perception of the relevance of contextualized English textual patterns. The second theme identified was: a positive experience of learning English in the context of the textual resources. Learner enjoyment of the learning task was a sub-theme of this second theme. The third theme was: motivation to learn to communicate concepts via appropriate textual patterns. This theme involved the sub-theme of successful mastery of contextualized patterns at text, paragraph and sentence level as described by the theorists discussed in the section on *background to research* in this article. The following paragraphs explain the above

mentioned themes and sub-themes in detail, together with substantiating evidence from the reflections, interviews and extracts from work samples.

Theme 1: Meaningfulness of language learning situation

Several comments in the reflections and interviews revealed that learners ascribed relevance to the tasks they had been doing in the English for Pharmacy course. Many of the learners had direct experience of the culturally-centred topics covered in the assignment. The learners, therefore, attributed personal meaning to the English language event that communicated information to which learners related on a cultural level. In particular, one Chinese learner mentioned how she had first-hand knowledge of SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) disease being cured by acupuncture, the previous year in her home town.

Sub-theme 1: Familiarity with context of the textual resources

The general meaningfulness of the task was due to one particular factor that appeared after analysis of the data. This factor was that the learners felt at home with the context of the texts gathered and then written up. The following is a substantiating remark made in an interview:

“For those of us from the rural areas, this makes sense ...It encouraged me to gather my information and write a proper structured essay. It prepared me for the essays in my other subject on other topics”.

The learner was referring to his English assignment on traditional African medicine, a healing system that is highly valued in his culture. In an interview, another learner referred to his grandfather, a traditional healer, who had shown him various therapeutic herbs during their wanderings in the bush.

Sub-theme 2: Perception of relevance of English textual patterns

The learners' experience of the meaningfulness of the culturally contextualized language task appeared to be accompanied by their perception of the relevance of English textual patterns. This sub-theme is illustrated by the following substantiating remark made by a student, who wrote a descriptive report on the topic of Israeli home remedies:

“It's easy to remember all the things that make a good paragraph when writing about this interesting topic from my culture that I already knew a bit about”.

The learner was motivated to focus on the conventions of well-structured paragraphs, owing to a perceived logic of communicating data that he found personally meaningful and part of his cultural identity.

Theme 2: Positive learning experience

The learners found the English for Pharmacy course constructive and a source of effective contextualized language learning. Learners said that they had learnt a great deal, and the completed reports submitted were proof of conscientiously completed assignments. Moreover, the learners had not only benefited pedagogically from the experience, but it appears from the analysis of the data that learners took pleasure in reading their sources and then writing about cultural experiences for their research reports.

Sub-theme 1: Learner enjoyment

The sub-theme of *learner enjoyment* is exemplified by the following remark regarding traditional African healers that practice in the city near to the university:

“I had fun interviewing the Sangomas in Central. They even gave me a pamphlet explaining how they could cure anything from erectile dysfunction to money problems”.

The fact the learners took pleasure in their research that was not an unwelcome burden shows that learning was gratifying. Many learners interviewed expressed delight in being able to use terminology in their own language. One learner said that he was proud to explain and name the herbs used in his Xhosa culture like “*umhlonyane* that heals fever”. He added that there are different types of herbal medicine: “*iqwili* that is dried, and others that are wet, like *intelezi*”.

A sense of belonging and safety seemed to pervade the learners who found the topic interesting and were, thus, keen to complete their research reports. The following extract from a report reveals the learner’s thorough research of the topic of *orange peel*, a medication that she said, during an interview, that she personally used:

“Traditional Chinese herbal medicine uses several citrus peels for specific health support, including those of mandarin orange (*Citrus reticulata* ‘Blanco’) and bitter orange (*C. aurantium*). For hundreds of years, herbalists trained in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) have used mature mandarin orange peel, known as *chen pi* or *ju pi* to improve digestion, relieve intestinal gas and phlegm. This peel acts primarily on the digestive and respiratory systems”.

The learner had engaged with the topic that she understood from personal experience and appeared motivated to deconstruct and reconstructs texts about Chinese herbal medicine.

Theme 3: Motivation to learn academic textual conventions

The learners’ willingness to tackle difficult subject specific reading and writing tasks was particularly expressed in the remark:

“I want to apply the skills that you taught us to use in class to my own reading and writing for the traditional healing project and to other subject assignments too”.

In general, learners were not resistant to communicating indigenous data in the language of the westernized scientific community. They assumed the identity of a global scientific communicator whilst communicating culturally-centred information. Learners made remarks such as “I feel good explaining my culture like proper scientific knowledge in proper English too”.

Sub-theme 1: Successful mastery of subject-specific language patterns

Analysis of work samples, reflections and notes made during interviews revealed that learners gave evidence of managing to understand and use the English textual conventions of genre, register, discourse semantics and lexicogrammar that were discussed in the section on background to the research. These conventions were appropriate to particular pharmacy subject disciplines, such as the treatment of diseases in pathophysiology. However, the learners of the case study had used them whilst communicating concepts embedded in their particular cultures.

Sub-theme 1: Genre

Many learners understood that they had written texts with a specific purpose, such as a descriptive report on a particular Eastern therapy. One learner understood the difference between two types of genre that had been discussed during the course:

“I know that a discussion essay supports an opinion and that a descriptive report just describes facts, like my essay on acupuncture. I know that in western society there is a debate about this medicine, but my essay was not about that. I was simply explaining what we do in China”.

The majority of learners also indicated the ability to apply genre knowledge by appropriately structuring their reports. The following is an example of an introduction written by a learner:

“The term *healing system* refers to therapeutic or medicinal methods of curing illness and disease. The topic of this information report is basically the process of healing people and animals using the resources of nature that have been used in traditional African culture for many years. In dealing with this topic, the researcher will explain the following: composition and source of herbal remedies, the calling or vocation of a *Sangoma* and why some individuals reject traditional healing. Various isiXhosa scientific terms are used in this report, and these are indicated in italics”.

The learner had classified his topic as a traditional healing system and then, indicated his approach in his report, or the sections of description, that would follow the introduction. This example shows conscious knowledge and application of the patterns that lead to the meaningful stages of the descriptive report genre.

Sub-theme 2: Register

Learners applied their knowledge regarding the scientific register of their written assignments on culturally-rooted topics. The following statement shows that learners understood the formal relationship between the reader and writer in the written mode of a scientific text:

“I learnt that I should write ‘the researcher’ and not ‘I’ when I write a report”.

The learner, thus, showed successful appreciation of the formal tenor appropriate to the register and textual genre of a scientific report. Field is another facet of register, and entails the area of expertise of the text, such as pathophysiology in the case of a descriptive report on therapies for disease. A learner commented in an interview on the field of research involved, in studying a particular herbal medicine:

“I could explain the chemistry of the African Potato that traditional healers say cures AIDS. I tried to give information on what is in the African Potato that might cure disease”.

This remark shows an awareness of the field that involved a biochemistry perspective of the biological phenomenon of disease treatment.

Sub-theme 3: Discourse semantics

Analysis of data regarding the pharmacy learners’ experience of writing a scientific report on a culturally relevant topic, disclosed their access to discourse semantics as meaningful ranks

(stages and phases) of their written communication. Earlier in this article's section on *analysis findings*, an example of an introduction to appropriate stages in a learners' written report was cited. This is evidence of learner use of appropriate discourse semantics at text level. Many learners were also aware of the need for a hierarchical structuring of ideas at paragraph level. A learner stated:

"We have to make a general statement about the main idea at the beginning of each paragraph and then, give all the supporting ideas."

The learner appeared to have consciously mastered the notion of a topic sentence that led to the extrapolation and elaboration of a main idea, as appropriate to meaning making at paragraph level. Many learners managed to convey logical messages via key wordings in orderly phases of meaning in their paragraphs. The following is an example of a well-structured paragraph:

"There is a tried and trusted Boere remedy for stings, especially those caused by a plant such as, Poison Ivy. When symptoms like weeping and itching occur, the patient should apply a special paste. This paste is made of a mixture of Turmeric (Borrie) powder and pure lemon juice. If a few drops of Tea Tree Oil are added, this may help reduce the itching. The paste should completely cover the sting area, until it dries completely before it is rinsed off. A bandage should not be used because the air will draw out the poison that is growing inside the tissue. The process needs to be repeated daily until the infection is healed."

The first sentence introduced the topic of the paragraph: the treatment of stings. The following sentences described the composition and then, the application of the remedy in detail. The learner had found the original source text on the Internet that had been written as a list of procedures to perform via the use imperative verbs. The learner had learnt to rephrase the text in the way such information would be conveyed in scientific writing. In particular, the passive voice replaced the imperative form of the verbs. The following section will elaborate on this and other lexicogrammar patterns taught to the learners.

Sub-theme 4: Lexicogrammar patterns

Frequent agentless passives were evident in the learners' work samples. Learners were aware of the appropriateness of this convention, as evidenced in the following remark:

"Our Chemistry lecturer wants us to use the passive in lab reports. She said we mustn't say 'the Bunsen Burner was lit by someone', just 'the Bunsen Burner was lit'".

This learner appeared to understand the grammatical structure and could explain it with an example. The following extract from a written report also shows application of the agentless passive rule:

"Herbs are processed in many ways such as....soaking, slicing".

The learner had not referred to any particular individual involved in the process and thus, explained the indigenous topic in an appropriate scientific manner.

The use of the third person is another feature of scientific writing that requires the use of the impersonal tenor. Learners learnt to use the third person "it" in the possessive pronoun form "its" as evidenced by the following comment:

“I learnt that I must write ‘its’ and not ‘it’s’ when I write a sentence like: *The correction position of the acupuncture needle is important. Its exact location must match the pressure point shown on the body chart*”.

The learner was one of many to use the contraction “it’s” that was inappropriately colloquial on the one hand, and grammatically incorrect, on the other. However, as is evident in her comment above, she had learnt from her error and understood the conventions that she should use in the future.

Nominalization or the use of long nominal groups containing strings of adjectives or nouns acting as adjectives is another feature of scientific writing that learners successfully used in their reports. The following extract from a completed report uses nouns modified by one or more grammatical elements:

“A *Sangoma* or traditional healer (*Igqirha*) is different to a traditional herbalist (*Ixhwele*) and also different to a westernized medical doctor that is termed *Ugqirha* in Xhosa ... the *Sangoma* is called by ancestors and must respond to the call to avoid negative physical, mental, behavioural, social, occupational and educational problems”.

Nominalization, as used by the learner above, involves complex phrases and is similar to lexical density, also a characteristic of scientific texts. However, lexical density usually involves long sentences containing many clauses, often in complex degrees of dependence and with a lot of embedding. The following extract provides an example:

“Other herbal remedies for headaches are dried plants, such as *iqwili*, that is burnt, dried and inhaled as smoke when burnt. Some roots are crushed when they are wet, like *intelezi*, that is used for washing by someone in need of good luck.

The above example is typical of the type of sentences that learners had to negotiate in their descriptive reports on topics that were linked to their individual cultures. Moreover, these were the language patterns that learners would have to access when communicating information in pharmacy-specific content subjects.

Discussion of the findings

The analysis findings showed that successful learning had taken place as a result of the interaction of: the teacher (as the mediator of the learning tasks); the learner (with a particular cultural identity) and culturally relevant information (expressed in language that was appropriate to Pharmacy degree studies). This learning event was based on Vygotsky’s (1981) model as outlined earlier in the article. Moreover learners had used culturally appropriate texts as a resource for negotiating textual patterning described by the language theorists discussed in the background to the research section of this article. When the cultural background of individual learners was not only acknowledged, but also actively used, in a degree appropriate language learning situation, learners were motivated to communicate information using salient textual conventions.

Analysis of the data revealed that the cognitively demanding English discussed earlier in this article, was successfully accessed because of the learners’ perception of the meaningfulness of the language learning situation. As King *et al.* (2006) maintain, successful learning depends

on the realization of learner attribution of meaning, motivation and a positive learning experience. This was made possible by the integration of culturally appropriate information with the English for Pharmacy course.

The case study revealed that the integration of cultural identity with English language learning tasks led to the realization of individual linguistic potential in an academic context. Resourcing cultural experience as a vehicle for language tasks in a language support programme is particularly relevant in South Africa, for example, where according to Jones (2004), there are 200000 traditional healers, who are regularly consulted by 60% of the population.

An educational paradigm shift towards inclusiveness will serve the interests of learner-centred language education. With increased globalization of many educational institutions, linguistic considerations from cultural perspectives need to be addressed. At the level of classroom practice, further research should be done on perceptions and practice regarding learner-centred language learning that is culturally and linguistically sensitive. Research needs to be especially done by teachers regarding their own interaction with groups of multicultural learners, in the interests of cultural and linguistic potential. Learning materials should include texts on culturally relevant data that exemplify discipline-specific textual conventions.

Effective learning necessitates the indivisible development of contextualized language skills as a means “to sort one’s thoughts about the world” (Novick 2006:1). By learning the complex layers of subject-specific language in cultural contexts, multicultural learners may learn to linguistically unfurl concepts with which they are familiar. Once they have practised using the appropriate language of learning in a culturally relevant context, they may feel motivated to use the same textual conventions in the context of their content subjects, such as those of the Pharmacy degree programme for which the learners of this case study were registered.

Conclusion

In this article, the writer has discussed the topic of resourcing culturally relevant texts as a resource for an assignment in English for Pharmacy. She has provided a model for learner access to the complex textual patterns that need to be mastered for successful scientific communication in the content subjects that make up the Pharmacy degree curriculum. Qualitative data supported the writer’s findings that successful mastery of complex textual conventions is facilitated by resourcing cultural identity.

The English for Pharmacy course introduced culturally sensitive language teaching that minimised learner marginalisation in a multicultural learning situation. The teaching intervention experienced by the learners of the case study led to the learners’ positive self-concept in learning to manage academic language tasks. The culturally-centred texts that the learners read and wrote were different to those they accessed in their content subjects. However, using the same language of learning from a different cultural perspective meant that learners could become effective communicators of the information they need to negotiate authentically in their degree programme. This may be possible if culturally relevant topics and English language support courses succeed in informing and complementing one another.

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