

Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir*

University of Iceland, Iceland
birnaarn@hi.is

Patricia Prinz

Mercy College, New York, New York, USA
pprinz@mercy.edu

FROM EFL TO EMI: DEVELOPING WRITING SKILLS FOR THE HUMANITIES

Abstract

This paper presents a study of a program designed to address challenges in writing English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) (Dearden, 2015; Flowerdew, 2016) at the University of Iceland, where EMI programs continue to expand appreciably. Nordic and international exchange students enrolled in EMI humanities programs are fluent in conversational English and informal writing but lack discipline-specific writing competencies for tertiary study in English. A program which operationalizes targeted core writing competencies was developed to improve writing in a single semester. The program design drew on research investigating the needs of competent L1 writers (Lavelle & Guarino, 2003) and of L2 writers in the Nordic countries (Arnbjörnsdóttir & Ingvarsdóttir, 2015; Hellekjær, 2009). Based on pre- and post-surveys and students' reflections, this study examines the extent to which the new academic writing approach and curriculum met the semester goals of transitioning students to thesis-driven writing and developing a sense of autonomy for future writing assignments. The pre-study revealed that 10 years of EFL writing instruction developed students' awareness of the principles of academic writing, yet they failed to apply them when writing in the disciplines. The post- data analysis and reflections revealed increased genre awareness, greater writer efficacy and autonomy, and improved academic writing.

Key words

L2 academic writing, EMI, ESAP, humanities.

* Corresponding address: Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir, Saemundargata 2, 101 Reykjavík, Iceland.