CCCC 2022 Text and Institutional Background

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**Title:** Implementing discipline-specific academic writing provision in an English medium instructional context

**Introduction**

Along with growth in the role of English in the academy globally, English medium instruction (EMI) has seen tremendous growth over the last two decades (Macaro, 2018; Wächter and Maiworm, 2014). While the parameters of the term EMI itself are contested (see an overview in Rose et al., 2021; Pecorari and Malstrom, 2018), here EMI will be defined using the most commonly cited definition of EMI, which is understood as the teaching of academic subjects, such as biology, business studies and history, through English where English is not the primary language of the majority of the population (Macaro, 2018; Dearden, 2015). EMI has been implemented in diverse contexts in a variety of formats (Richards and Pun, 2021), but there is near consensus in the literature that students in EMI courses typically receive inadequate language and literacy support (Zhou et al., 2021; Galloway and Ruegg, 2020; Macaro et al., 2018). While some form of language and literacy support may be offered, it is often seen by students as irrelevant to their studies. McKinley and Rose (2022) highlight that where language and literacy support does exist in EMI contexts, it is often conceptualized and situated outside the EMI curriculum, in preparatory year courses or concurrent model courses. While concurrent language and literacy provision, offered alongside subject curricula rather than prior to it, does exist in many EMI contexts, it is typically generic (Galloway and Ruegg, 2020). These preparatory year and generic concurrent support models of academic language and literacy provision, which are divorced from students’ disciplines and typically follow a ‘study skills approach’ (Lea and Street, 1998), are a bolt-on to curricula (Wingate, 2006) and are not tailored to the discipline-specific needs of students.

There are examples of discipline-specific language and literacy support in the EMI literature (e.g. Rose et al., 2020), but these report on provision in single departments or courses rather than institution-wide provision. This is similar to much of the literature in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) which reports on discipline-specific provision in individual departments or programs (e.g. Wingate, 2011; Sloan and Porter, 2010; Dudley-Evans, 2001), pr provision which may only be targeted to those for whom English is an additional language (e.g Fenton-Smith et al., 2018). This is problematic for two key reasons. The first is that *all* students require support in developing academic literacy, regardless of their L1 background. Wingate (2015) has argued that rather than provision that is targeted only to those who are deemed at risk of failure or for those whom English is an additional language, academic language and literacy provision should be provided across the university, inclusive of all students. The academic language and literacy support needs of students in EMI contexts may be even further compounded given the proficiency levels of students, who face language-related challenges (Kamasak et al., 2021), further highlighting the need for institution-wide language and literacy provision.

The second reason that a lack of institution-wide, discipline-specific academic language and literacy provision in EMI contexts is problematic is that the development of academic literacy is necessarily tied to the discourse practices of academic discourse communities, whose practices are highly specific. Hyland (2018) has argued that there is now a large body of evidence detailing the significant variation in rhetorical choices and conventions in genres across disciplines, which are in response to discipline-specific epistemological and social practices. Following corpus analysis using the BAWE corpus, Nesi and Gardner (2012), too, have argued that the genres, expectations, and practices surrounding students' assessed genres are highly specific and vary tremendously across disciplines. The specific nature of the genres students engage with and produce calls into question the relevance and transferability of generic academic language and literacy provision, which conceals this variation and teaches academic language and literacy practices as an undifferentiated mass, as Hyland (2002) has argued.

In order to address the discipline-specific writing needs of students in university, much of the EAP literature recommends a discipline-specific, genre-based approach, grounded in collaborative pedagogies. While genre-based pedagogies (see an overview in Hyon, 2018) and levels of collaboration between EAP and discipline lecturers toward these pedagogies, do vary, EAP genre-based pedagogies generally seek to make the structural and rhetorical conventions of, as well as the context and practices surrounding, genres explicit (Wingate, 2015). They do this through pedagogical frameworks, which include a series of stages to scaffold instruction often beginning with a focus on the context and practices surrounding the genre, rhetorical consciousness raising through group or individual genre analysis tasks, collaborative writing, and independent writing. The genres under focus in these discipline-specific, genre-based approaches are drawn from students’ discipline courses, and thus they require collaboration with discipline lecturers. This collaboration varies widely. Discipline lecturers may play the role of an informant providing readings and text samples, a collaborator who works with EAP practitioners on jointly developing materials, or a co-teacher (Hyland, 2019), though, team-teaching is rare in the EAP and the EMI literature (Wingate, 2018; Lasagabaster, 2018).

Given the wide body of EAP literature which evidences the highly specific nature of disciplinary genres, the necessity of academic language and literacy provision for all students, and the dearth of institution-wide, discipline-specific academic language and literacy provision globally, more research is needed evidencing the implementation of this provision in EMI contexts. This study is unique in its exploration of the implementation of discipline-specific, genre-based pedagogy in EAP provision across a partial EMI university.

**Research Aims**

This ongoing project, part of a PhD study in progress, aims to gain an in-depth look at the institution-wide implementation of academic literacy provision developed through collaboration between EAP and discipline specialists in one university transitioning to partial EMI, the perceived effectiveness of this implementation by teaching staff, students and university management, the feasibility of this approach to academic literacy provision, and challenges that arise throughout implementation of this approach in the EMI context.

**Research Questions**

The research questions this study seeks to address include the following

* What are student, staff, and academic leadership perceptions regarding the usefulness of institution-wide academic literacy provision in the EMI context?
* How feasible is this approach to academic literacy provision from the perspective of EAP and subject specialists?
* What challenges arise in implementing academic literacy provision in credit-bearing EAP modules and in collaboration toward it in the EMI context?

**Research Methodology**

Through the collection of student questionnaires, in-depth one-to-one interviews with teaching staff, focus group interviews with students, and classroom observations, as well as course documents and institutional policy and report documents, this single case study will seek to illuminate the process of and issues particular to the implementation of academic language and literacy provision developed through collaboration between EAP and discipline specialists in the Faculty of Sciences and School of Engineering. A case study approach has been selected as it allows for in-depth description of a single bounded entity, such as an educational institution (Hood, 2009), and a focal phenomenon, implementation of discipline-specific, institution-wide EAP provision, in context. One-to-one interviews will allow for the gathering, and subsequent analysis through ‘thematic analysis’ (Braun and Clarke, 2021) of both staff and students’ perceptions of the discipline-specific, genre-based approach implemented and materials developed. Analysis of classroom observation data, including genre-related episodes (Tardy and Gou, 2021), will allow for direct observation of students’ experiences and challenges with discipline-specific, genre-based learning materials. This research takes place at one university in Beirut, Lebanon, which is transitioning toward partial EMI, supported through the implementation of credit-bearing, discipline-specific EAP modules as well as integrated academic literacy provision institution wide, a unique case (Duff, 2008) globally. I discuss the institutional context next.

**Institutional Description:**

The university where my research takes place is trilingual and transitioning to partial English medium instruction (EMI) university across the university, which is situated in Beirut, Lebanon, though it also has three regional campuses across the country. English medium instruction is implemented in varying formats across the university ranging from full EMI where all instruction, materials and assignments are in English to partial EMI where select courses, lectures, materials or assignments are in English and others are in French, the primary language of the university, or Arabic, the official language of Lebanon.

To support students’ academic literacy development as the university continues to implement EMI across the university, the advanced level English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course has been redesigned to be discipline-specific, taught in parallel/linked with a discipline course, and focused on student genres (e.g. a lab report, a literature review, and an engineering design report) from the parallel subject course (e.g. biology, chemistry, mathematics, physics, and engineering). It has also changed in status to be credit-bearing and inclusive of all students, diverse in their linguistic backgrounds, rather than targeted to students who have not passed language proficiency requirements. A course redesign is being piloted this year in the Faculty of Sciences and School of Engineering and will be rolled out university-wide in the coming three years continuing next year with the School of Medicine and Faculty of Economics. The course redesign has included needs analysis, development of goals and objectives, syllabus design and development of new instructional materials. Materials development has followed on from genre move analysis as is described by Tribble and Wingate (2013). Following Tribble and Wingate’s (2013) approach, I met with subject specialists to discuss the conventions and context of the genres, collected student texts with marker comments, carried out move analysis, and developed inductive genre-based materials in which students carry out genre analysis, guided and scaffolded throughout the materials.

Before I began to work for the university where my research is situated, I was a consultant there with my PhD supervisor consulting on implementing discipline-specific academic literacy provision university-wide, a rarity in the literature (Wingate, 2019). In order to support the implementation of the discipline-specific, genre-based EAP approach, we met with a subject lecturer, gathered samples of student writing, carried out genre move analysis, met again with the subject lecturer to confirm our analysis and ask follow-up questions. We then developed a set of instructional materials for the electrical and mechanical engineering design report. This was followed by a workshop for EAP instructors focusing on the genre-based approach, collaboration with subject lecturers, and materials development. Following the workshop, EAP instructors were matched with a discipline and continued the same process for collaboration and materials development. The new EAP courses have been implemented in the Faculty of Sciences in the fall 2021 and the School of Engineering in the spring semester 2022. There will be a phased rollout across the university in the 2022-2023 academic year.

In the CCCC 20222 workshop, I hope to receive feedback on this ongoing project, course design, materials development, and research design, particularly from those in international contexts, where academic language and literacy provision may be offered in diverse formats.

**Key Theorists and Theories:**

The course redesign and materials development, which form part of this project, have been underpinned by genre theory (Swales, 1990; Tardy et al., 2020), arguments for genre-based and discipline-specific EAP (Hyland, 2004; 2008; Hyland, 2018), and empirical research evidencing the effectiveness of compulsory, inclusive, discipline-specific, genre-based academic literacy provision (Wingate, 2015; Tribble and Wingate, 2013).

**Key Frames: Research Design and Methods**

My report here is part of a larger single case study on the implementation of academic literacy provision university-wide in an EMI university in Lebanon, which utilizes a mixed-methods design. Through the collection of one-to-one interviews with subject lecturers, EAP instructors, and academic leadership; as well as classroom observations, focus group interviews, and questionnaires for students, this case study explores student and staff perceptions of the genre-based, discipline-specific approach and materials developed.

**Glossary of Terms**

Academic literacy – defined by Wingate (2015:6) as ‘the ability to communicate competently in an academic discourse community’ including communication and academic discourse community practices in reading, writing, listening, and speaking

Case study – Duff (2019) defines case study:

‘Regardless of what constitutes the case (a person, site, or situation), by definition one or more single bounded units are selected for study because they exemplify an issue of theoretical or practical concern. Cases may confirm, disconfirm, complicate, illustrate, describe, explain, or extend existing knowledge in a variety of ways by drawing on diverse epistemological, theoretical, and methodological frameworks. Despite the range in types and purposes of case studies, one commonality is that they provide concrete instances of a phenomenon of interest.'

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) - Hyland (2006) highlights that EAP is usually defined as teaching English with the aim of assisting learners’ study or work in English

English medium instruction (EMI) - EMI is defined by Macaro (2018) as the study of academic subjects through English in contexts where English is not the primary language of students and teachers

Genre-based EAP - sees genre as communicative events used by academic discourse communities, and operationalize ideas about genre through genre analysis, basing instruction and materials on genres, contexts and practices in target academic discourse communities

Genre move analysis – in EAP, genre move analysis entails collecting representative text samples to identify salient features of the genre, such as recurring rhetorical and lexico-grammatical moves (Swales, 1990)

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