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Integrating Language and Content in Higher Education: An Economist Point of View

Economics is a scientific discipline drawing heavily on mathematics and logical reasoning. From a university lecturer's within economics point of view, students' insufficient academic English writing skills when tackling project reports lead to at least three specific problems. First, both lecturers and examiners become frustrated and negatively biased when reading poorly written texts. Second, the definition of basic logical concepts used within economics often comes across as unclear. Last, the intuitive explanation of mathematical and logical results often appears messy. For these reasons, the quality of written English influences the grade given to students. At my department (represented by me), we have therefore started to cooperate with the Centre for Internationalisation and Parallel Language Use on improving the quality of students' written academic English and preparing them for writing their master's thesis in our English-medium MSc program. We have integrated a language-focused module into a mandatory content course designed to prepare Danish and international students for their master's thesis writing. The language module consists of the following components: a) an introductory lecture on the fundamentals of academic writing in English within the discipline; b) language-related electronic written feedback on part of a project report before submission; c) a feedback workshop based on examples from the students' writing. The quality of the master's thesis submitted by the students who have already participated in the language module has improved considerably. Thus, I see the inclusion of the English module in the course as a success, and as a content teacher, I believe that integrating language and content in higher education is important.