

Autonomy in Teaching and Learning Subject-Specific Academic Literacy

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Abstract : In this paper, the notion of autonomy in language teaching and learning is explored with a view to designing particular subject-specific academic literacy at higher education level, for mostly English second or third language learners at the Nelson Mandela University, Port Elizabeth, South Africa. These courses that are contextualized in subject-specific fields studied by students in Arts, Education and Social Science Faculties aim to facilitate learners in the manipulation of cognitively demanding academic texts. However, classroom contact time for these courses is limited to one ninety sessions per week. Thus, learners need to be autonomously responsible for developing their own skills when manipulating and negotiating appropriate academic textual conventions. Thus, a model was designed to allow for gradual learner independence in language learning skills. Learners experience of the model was investigated using the Phenomenological Research Approach. Data in the form of individual written reflections and transcripts of unstructured group interviews were analyzed for themes and sub-themes. These findings are discussed in the article with a view to addressing the practical concerns of the learners in this case study.

Keywords : academic literacies, autonomy, language learning and teaching, subject-specific language

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