

IMPLEMENTATION OF ACADEMIC WRITING TEACHING TECHNIQUES AT ENGLISH CLASSES

Explained in the article is the importance of teaching academic writing in the system of higher education. The article traces the major methodological aspects of organizing the process of writing essays. Some ways of essay evaluation and avoiding plagiarism are defined.

Key words: *academic writing, essay, prewriting techniques, introduction, conclusion, evaluation, plagiarism.*

As we observe modern life stipulates the usage of writing. Writing facilitates learner mobility and competitiveness in the job market. Academic writing is considered to be an integral part of all ESP (English for Specific Purposes) courses. In the light of Common Framework of Reference for Languages strategies for diversifying and intensifying language learning are very important at present time.

Psychological and psycholinguistic aspects of writing have been contemplated by such famous Russian and Ukrainian scientists as: O. Tarnopol'skyi, A. Davidenko, I. Zymnia, K. Lazarenko, L. Mazunova, S. Nikolaieva, N. Skliarenko, and others. *Some authors have worked out methodological foundations of teaching some kinds of writing activities, such as note-taking* (V. Pavlova), creative writing (O. Tarnopol'skyi), formal letters (S. Litvin). But it should be acknowledged that *teaching academic writing at foreign language classes is not paid due tribute to so far in Ukraine.*

A very important contribution to the methodology of *teaching academic writing* was made by American and British linguists and Professors L. Blanton, T. Johnson, F. Linda, A. Seow, A. Oshima, C. Spencer, B. Arbon, J. Swales, M. Swan, D. Zemach. They worked out the step-by-step process for researching and writing successful academic papers, some useful pre-writing strategies to generate students' ideas for writing, the ways to avoid plagiarism, different feedback formats (self-evaluation, peer-evaluation, and teacher-evaluation), the main features of academic writing, transitions for combining sentences etc. Useful workshops and *academic writing courses* organized by Professors and English language specialists from Oxford, Cambridge, Howard, Wisconsin Universities are available in the Internet. US Embassy in Ukraine organizes Academic and Professional Exchange Programs for English advisors.

English learners do not have to process only but also to produce. They are to write essays, written reports, summary reports, motivation letters, and project work. They should make adequate usable notes; organize paragraphs, making headings and subheadings; use logical connectors for linking paragraphs; write introduction and conclusion; quote correctly; construct bibliography, etc.

Academic writing is clearly defined by having a clear purpose, either an exam question to answer or research project to report on. Most academic writing in English is linear: it starts at the beginning and finishes at the end, with every part contributing to the main line of argument. "Whatever kind of writing you are producing, the writer is responsible for making your line of argument clear and presenting it in orderly manner that the reader can follow" [6, p. 5].

The department of foreign languages of Tavria State Agrotechnological University suggests students of all specialties participating in the yearly contest for the best essay on a definite topic. The topics are as follows: "How have the English classes in TSATU helped me to become a successful person?", "What event in your student's life in TSATU has become the most significant one for you and why?", "How do you understand the quotation 'A country's competitiveness starts not on the factory floor or in the engineering lab. It starts in the classroom (Lee Iacocca, Ex-President and CEO of Chrysler)'?" Besides, the students are assigned to write different essays according to the curriculum, for example: "The house of my dream", "What is an ideal job for me?", "Pros and cons of my future profession", "Globalization of an accountant's role in modern society" (for future accountants), etc. The students consider that they gain rich experience for their future career due to learning writing essays.

How does the course of teaching academic writing work?

Firstly, we ask students what the term 'academic writing' means for them, if they have any *experience of academic writing and which one, what kind of writing they did, what length their writings were, what part of writing they enjoyed, what difficulties they usually came across during writing, and what they expect to learn from the course. Therefore, we discuss their attitude to academic writing and its purpose, which is "the presentation of 'new knowledge' via a review of what is currently known about a given topic as the foundation for the author's new views or perspectives on the topic"* [3, p. 14].

And only after that students are given explanations as to the importance of learning how to write good essays, summary reports, research papers, etc. for their future career. Students notice that essays are written "from one's experience and knowledge for a general audience" [6, p. 12] *in friendly, everyday language, and can be handwritten or typed.* According to L. Flower "students create a text of their own, trying to integrate information from sources with ideas of their own, and attempting to do so under the guidance of a purpose" [1, p. 28].

It is important to define the aim of the essay which should be deduced strictly from the wording of the title or question, and needs to be defined at the beginning. The purpose of the essay is to say something using the idea of the subject, to present ideas one has learned in their own way.

After discussing the main theoretical points we proceed to practice. *Taking into consideration that writing is a continuous process which ends up with well-organized ideas on paper – that is, it starts at the beginning and goes through some steps in a specific order; students are to be taught all these steps.* Thus, the advisor should explain the nature and purpose of each step of the academic writing process: *getting started; prewriting and outlining; gathering and organizing the information; writing the draft; revising and rewriting; editing and rewriting* [7, p. 7].

After having got the assignment students should express their understanding it by answering the questions: What should I do? What is the purpose of the essay? What will I learn? What is important about the topic? Why does the topic excite me? What do I think the reader would want to know? What did I do to plan before I began writing? [7, p. 5].

Teaching prewriting techniques is very important in the essay writing process. Students should write the topic at the top of the paper and then make a list of ideas that come into their minds about the topic (listing). They may use words as well as phrases or sentences. They may also draw a "balloon" and write the topic into it, then make balloons around the central one and write down in them as many ideas on the topic as they can (clustering). Students may use another way of prewriting: write as much as they can about the topic until they run out of ideas (free writing). They do not have to worry about spelling or grammar. While rereading they should circle the main ideas which are to be developed [2, p. 4].

One of the most significant steps in essay writing is brainstorming. It is the art of thinking critically to discover original, hidden insights about the topic [3, p. 12]. *Brainstorming technique is aimed at defining the problem, exploring the evidence, identifying assumptions, doing some research, etc. Advisors usually choose the prewriting technique which works best for their students.*

After they look through the ideas they have generated, and highlight the most useful of them, students prepare an outline. The outline allows students to think thoroughly beforehand what they are going to write about; if they have done their planning right, they won't have to do as much rewriting. When they construct their outline, they should keep it brief. The titles, headings, and points in the outline should be about one line each. As students say, an outline prevents disorder.

Gathering information is one more important part of academic writing. Information may come from three sources: facts the students know, facts they find from reading and facts they discover for themselves. Some pieces of advice will be of great help for them: as they read about the topic, they should keep a piece of paper and pen handy to write down interesting quotations they find; with print sources, they might put a checkmark beside interesting passages and write questions or other thoughts in the margins as well [3, p. 17].

As students explore the topic, they will naturally analyze the arguments of different authors. When analyzing the argument of any text, or creating one of their own, they should first identify the main claim and then locate all the reasons for it. After researching, analyzing, and brainstorming, students should have a worthwhile insight to write about. We have to revise that an informal essay consists of three main parts: the introduction, the body and the conclusion. We discuss the main points concerning the structure of an essay.

As students may conclude, an essay is made up of paragraphs about one subject.

The introduction begins the essay. The first goal in introduction is to grab the reader's attention and generate some interest about the topic. For that, one might present an interesting fact, a surprising piece of information, or an exciting quotation. So the first sentence should be an interesting comment about the topic. General comments include several sentences that give some background information about the topic. The thesis statement is the last and the most important sentence in the introduction. It states the specific topic of the essay. The introduction should introduce the central idea or the main purpose of the writing.

The main body consists of one or more paragraphs of ideas and arguments. Each paragraph develops a subdivision of the topic. The paragraphs of the essay contain the main ideas and arguments of the essay together with facts, descriptions, illustrations, examples, or experiences (i.e. supporting details) showing important or interesting information to help the reader understand the main idea.

A topic sentence is generally the first sentence of the paragraph, and it states the topic of the paragraph and describes its claim or point, thus orienting the reader to the purpose of the paragraph. The entire paragraph should be focused around the stated topic sentence. It's sometimes difficult for students to develop their ideas. So we have to teach them to implement some techniques for that: illustrate their ideas with examples, give an authoritative quotation, anticipate and respond to counterarguments, back the ideas with more evidence, offer another perspective to the idea, etc. It is very important that the arguments in the thesis are presented in a clear, balanced and unemotional way [1, p. 118].

The paragraphs should be linked in order to connect the ideas. The purpose of the essay must be made clear and the reader must be able to follow its development.

The conclusion includes the writer's final points. It should recall the issues which appear in the introduction but they should be expressed in different words than those in the introduction. Comments can include a summary of all the main ideas, an evaluation of the ideas, or writer's opinion. The final statement is a final thought that "ties up" the topic for the reader. It should clearly signal to the reader that the essay is finished and leave a clear impression that the purpose of the essay has been achieved. Any totally new ideas should not be introduced in the conclusion.

After discussing the structure of an essay students should decide what information is important, what they will put first, second, third. They may number the information in their notes in the order they will write about it (a

"planned" outline). Then students write their first drafts. To improve the content and organization of the paragraphs they give their essays to their classmates for evaluation. They are asked to fill in the evaluation checklists while reading one another's essays. A standard evaluation checklist contains the following questions: *Is the essay interesting? Is there a thesis statement at the end of the introduction? Do body paragraphs start with a clear topic sentence? Is there a conclusion that restates the thesis statement?* [2, p. 9]

Having analyzed the evaluation checklists and having discussed them with their group-mates students reread their essays focusing their attention on the content and organization of the paragraphs, looking for spelling, grammar, and punctuation mistakes. Then they edit and rewrite their essays.

Responding to student's writing plays a great role in successful teaching essay writing. It is appropriate between drafting and revising. We can do it in an oral or written form (in the margin, between sentences, or at the end of the essay) [8, p. 13]. Responses have to be text-specific in the form of helpful suggestions concerning the essay organization, topic sentences and supporting ones, the style and linking words, citation and references, etc.

While reading the students' drafts we usually analyze the organization, strong and weak points of essays, the main ideas, the ideas which need further development or clarification, etc. It is useful sometimes to ask students to rewrite their essays without their first drafts, or read each other's essays aloud in class. In such a case, they have a chance to rethink what they have written.

Lastly, they proofread the final copy to check it according to the requirements, as well as for vocabulary use, essay style, references, and checking for plagiarism.

Plagiarism is a serious problem and it is very important to teach students to avoid it in their papers. They are taught how to paraphrase and quote from original texts. D. Pecorari argues that universities should avoid placing responsibility for academic writing solely with students and look at how we can teach our way out of the problem [4, p. 34].

There are three main ways to integrate quotations into the essay: direct quotation, paraphrase, and mixed quotation. Students should usually paraphrase the material, and only directly quote it, or give a mixed quotation when the phrasing of the quotation is interesting, memorable or catchy.

Direct quotation involves quoting word for word one or more sentences from an author or source. When they quote, they have to be sure to introduce their quotation with a clause that lets the reader know who the author or source is.

Paraphrase, instead of quoting the author word for word, involves putting the original phrasing into one's own words. Students have to be careful to substantially reword the original, however. If they leave just several words in a row unchanged, it will be considered plagiarism because it's essentially stealing someone else's phrasing.

Mixed quotations are a mix between direct quotation and paraphrase. Mixed quotations involve paraphrasing half of the original but mixing in a few direct selections from the author. In this case one should be sure to blend in the quotation with the grammar of one's own sentence.

We should also teach our students the elements of unity and coherence which are necessary features of academic writing. Unity means that only one idea is discussed in the paragraph. The main idea is stated in the topic sentence of the paragraph, and then each supporting sentence develops that idea.

Coherence means that a paragraph is easy to read and understand because all supporting sentences are constructed in a logical order and connected with the help of appropriate transition words. The movement from one sentence to the next must be logical and smooth. Each supporting idea should be discussed one after the other. Furthermore, the relationship between the ideas should be expressed by the right transition of words or phrases. Students should remember about transition words not only between the sentences of the paragraph but between the paragraphs of an essay, too.

The workshop should be organized to teach students using sentence connectors. Only practice will help them to do it. First, students are to learn or revise the main linking words and phrases. So we teach them to combine sentences using linking words *'and, also, too, moreover, furthermore'* for additional information; *'that is, in other words, in fact, as a matter of fact'* for clarification; *'for example, for instance, such as, to illustrate'* for providing examples; *'because, since, for this reason'* for causes; *'consequently, as a result, therefore, thus'* for effect; *'first, first of all, second, before, after, then, next, later, more important, finally'* for meaningful order [6, p. 93].

Some attention is paid to punctuation marks too. Most frequently students make mistakes in using commas because there are great differences in their usage in English and Ukrainian. For example, students have to use commas after or before such phrases as *'namely, as well as, although, for example, for instance, in this way, to a certain extent, without doubt, that is why'* in English, whereas in Ukrainian commas are not used in these cases. It is useful to remind the main rules of its usage: after adverbial clauses and groups, before connectors to join two independent clauses, to separate some non-defining phrases from the rest of the sentence, etc. It should be mentioned here that punctuation is ignored by many EL teachers, and it has to be reconsidered.

At the end of the essay students should give the list of all the sources they have referred to. Their reference list must provide full and accurate details, as it is the means by which the reader can follow up these sources. They have to make sure that every text reference appears in the reference list, every item in the reference list is mentioned at least once in the assignment, and those references have the same spelling and dates as the ones in the reference list.

Evaluation is the necessary stage of teaching writing. But we must admit, that often we are short of time and don't pay due attention to it. Why is evaluation important for students? On one hand, it changes their attitude to writing: they become more responsible for their own essays. On the other hand, they clearly understand the main requirements, and try to do their best to reach excellent results. It should be stressed that it is the teacher's obligation

to present all the criteria for evaluation in advance. These criteria should include detailed interpretation of the assignment, development and organization of ideas, format or layout, grammar and structure, punctuation and spelling, and clarity of communication [5, p. 18].

English advisors should have process-oriented writing instructions with the help of which they systematically teach students problem-solving skills connected with the writing process that will enable them to realize specific goals at each stage of the process. Thus, the writing teaching program may be constructed as a set of instructions which provides students with a series of planned learning experiences to help them understand the nature of writing at each stage. The English advisors of our FL department offer advice, guidance, and tuition for students who wish to improve their writing skills. We try to explain to them the whole process of writing in simple and clear words. We organize lectures and workshops for the students of any level and specialty. And it really results in students' successful essays.

Thus, the importance of teaching academic writing in the system of higher education is immense. Academic writing plays a significant role not only in foreign language acquisition in modern society but also in learning the students' major. Writing is a good way to stimulate students' learning and critical thinking, and to generate their competitiveness.

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ІМПЛЕМЕНТАЦІЯ МЕТОДІВ НАВЧАННЯ АКАДЕМІЧНОГО ПИСЬМА НА ЗАНЯТТЯХ З АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ

У статті розкривається важливість навчання академічного письма у системі вищої освіти. Розглядаються основні методичні прийоми організації процесу написання есе на заняттях з англійської мови. Окреслюються деякі способи оцінювання есе, а також запобігання плагіату.

Ключові слова: академічне письмо, есе, перед-письмові прийоми, вступ, висновок, оцінювання, плагіат.

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ІМПЛЕМЕНТАЦІЯ МЕТОДОВ ОБУЧЕНИЯ АКАДЕМИЧЕСКОМУ ПИСЬМУ НА ЗАНЯТИЯХ ПО АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ

В статье раскрывается важность обучения академическому письму в системе высшего образования. Рассматриваются основные методические приемы организации процесса написания эссе на занятиях по английскому языку. Определяются некоторые способы оценивания эссе, а также уклонения от плагиата.

Ключевые слова: академическое письмо, эссе, пред-письменные приемы, вступление, заключение, оценивание, плагиат.

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