Development of Academic Writing Skills on the Bases of Academic Text Janres

Moldabayeva Karlygash[1], Odanova Sagira[2], Kim Olga[3], Berkenova Rabiga[4], Mukhamedina Elvira[5], Zhyldyz Takenova[6]

Abstract:

The article describes the difficulties that students encounter when mastering foreign language written speech in an English course for academic purposes in the context of the specifics of the course. Methodological approaches to teaching foreign language writing are analyzed, their strengths and weaknesses are identified, the possibility of using tasks peculiar to these approaches in the course of academic writing to overcome the described difficulties is considered. Examples are given to illustrate how tasks can be combined when writing an essay and an abstractThe article examines the basics of the process of development of academic writing, it is proposed to consider the research activities of senior students, the result of which is the project of the final qualifying work.

Introduction

Academic writing in English is taught in various forms all over the world. More recently, academic writing centers have begun to appear in Kazakh universities. Apart from terminological differences, by academic writing we will understand the creation of written texts in academic discourse.

The relevance of the problem under study is due to the fact that not all high school graduates have the skills and abilities to correctly and deeply understand the material being read, do not have relevant experience in writing, which leads to great difficulties when studying at a university.

The analysis of student papers revealed the following difficulties that students encounter when writing academic texts:

1) inability to logically organize the text in accordance with the specified requirements;
2) inability to use adequate language tools to ensure logical connections;
3) the use of lexical means and structures that do not correspond to the required register and level.

[1] Doctoral student Kazakh National Women's Teacher Training University, Kazakhstan, 050000, Almaty, Aiteke bi Street, 99
[2] Candidate of Philological Sciences, Associate professor NJSC «Kazakh National Research Technical University named after K. Satpayev Satpayev,University).Kazakhstan, 050000, Almaty, ул. Satbayeva, 22
[3] Candidate of pedagogical sciences, Associate Professor, The Taraz Regional University named after M.Kh. Dulaty, Bolnitschny pereulok, 39 080001 Taraz , Kazakhstan
[4] The head of Kazakh language and literature department, candidate of philological sciences, Taraz International Innovation Institute named after Sh. Murtaza
[5] Candidate of pedagogical sciences, Turan Astana University, Associate Professor of the Department of Pedagogy and Psychology
[6] Candidate of pedagogical sciences, associate professor, the head of Pedagogy Department, Alatoo International university

For example, a study conducted by P. Baker and I. Chen showed that collocations and lexical connectives used in academic texts by authors for whom English is not their native language differ from lexical combinations used by native speakers. In addition, the variability of language expression in the works of native speakers is greater; non-native speakers use an extremely limited repertoire of such phrases in writing. Moreover, the structure of the text reflects the peculiarities of the culture of its creator. Lecky notes that native English speakers expect the text to have a consistent organization, logical coherence of ideas, original, but understandable content of the work, in which the reader rarely has to think of anything (Baker,2010).

Now, by the end of the second decade of the XXI century, the requirements for representatives of humanitarian, technological and engineering disciplines with fundamental and applied knowledge in their professional field have significantly increased (Weigle,2002).

One of the components of the professional competence of today's specialists is the ability to understand, present and critically evaluate information of a scientific, technical and cultural nature, to communicate freely in a foreign language within the scope of their specialization. Graduates of the higher school consider a foreign language as a real means of economic and scientific cooperation. All this implies deep, versatile language training and work on the development of all types of speech activity.

The modern abundance of scientific and technical information provides today's students with rich Internet search capabilities and leads to the need to master foreign languages. When preparing course and diploma projects, students inevitably turn to electronic resources, and this only emphasizes the importance of choosing and understanding the original sources correctly (Leki,1992).

Despite the important role of professional interest in mastering foreign languages, today's methodologists speak not so much about teaching English for professional purposes (English for Specific Purposes), as about the need to form academic and communicative competence in foreign language courses language for academic purposes (English for Academic Purposes, hereinafter - EAP). The ultimate goal of such courses is to contribute to the development of students' ability to conduct their own research using a foreign language, and competently present their conclusions and results both orally and in writing (Coffin,2003).

Results

The term "academic literacy" is still of interest to scientists. The closest interpretation to us is N. V. Smirnova, who understands academic literacy as the ability to function effectively in the modern academic environment: to carry out intercultural academic communication on the basis of foreign professionally oriented texts, to think critically, to improve one's self-educational competence for educational and professional purposes (Hinkel,2004).

The generally recognized components of academic literacy are skills:

- understand the range of academic vocabulary in context;
- interpret metaphors and idioms in academic use, perceive shades, wordplay and ambiguity;
- understand the relationship between different parts of the text;
- interpret different types and types of text (genres);
- see the differences between important and non-essential information, facts and opinions, suggestions and arguments;
- distinguish between cause and effect;
- understand the communicative function of various ways of expression in academic texts (for example, providing examples, arguments);

- convey meaning (for example, academic text) beyond the sentence level.

It is quite obvious that how people acquire literacy depends on social and cultural factors. The approach to literacy as a social practice makes it possible to comprehend the differences in the use and meaning of literacy (Raimes,1983).

In English, the author is responsible for being understandable to the reader. In Russian, on the contrary, written statements do not have such a clear structure, and the reader has to complete part of the plan. In order to learn how to write academic texts in English, a foreign-speaking student must understand and accept the canons of English-language academic discourse.

The peculiarities of the academic text and the difficulties that arise in students closely related to them leave an imprint on the methodology of teaching academic writing. This article attempts to analyze different approaches to teaching writing, identify the types of tasks that are appropriate to use when teaching academic writing in English in a Russian-speaking audience, and also offer options for combining tasks when teaching the creation of various types of texts (Ur,2012).

Approaches

We will describe approaches to teaching writing and discuss how they can be used in teaching academic writing.

The "Controlled-to-Free Approach" approach has roots in the audio-lingual method. This method assumes that speaking is a leading skill, while writing is an auxiliary skill aimed at fixing grammatical and syntactic forms. The letter is carefully structured, and each step is aimed at developing a certain skill. First, exercises are performed at the sentence level, such as drawing up a sentence based on a model, combining simple sentences into complex ones, and setting the sentence members in the appropriate order. Further exercises focus on the structure of the paragraph and the coordination of sentences. Only after that comes the turn of supervised writing, editing and correction, and then students can express their thoughts in a free form. The main objectives of the approach are grammatical accuracy and correctness of writing; fluency and originality play a secondary role. Since the presence of supports and training exercises makes it possible to fill gaps in knowledge and develop the skill of organizing written utterance, elements of this approach in writing lessons are irreplaceable (Harmer,2004).

The opposite of the above approach is called "Free Writing" (Free-Writing Approach). Students are invited to express their thoughts arbitrarily for a limited period of time (five to ten minutes). It is believed that the more a student practices free writing, the better he knows it: literacy and mastery of structures come with time. Undoubtedly, in this way the fear of writing is removed and the habit and fluency of writing are developed. However, in a situation where English is a foreign language and there is no language immersion, in our opinion, purposeful work is needed to master grammatical and lexical forms.

There is an approach that focuses on the formation of the skill of writing a coherent paragraph (Paragraph-Pattern Approach), which is extremely important for mastering academic writing. Exercises for the development of this skill include setting parts of a paragraph in a logical order, selecting or creating a sentence expressing the main idea of the paragraph (topic sentence), or a final sentence summarizing the information presented (closing sentence), analysis and simulation of models. The focus is on grammatical accuracy and product creation orientation (Robinson,1998).

The Grammar-Syntax-Organization Approach is also focused on the form, but the reference point is the final product. Students are given a task, and they themselves must decide which structures are necessary for its successful completion. The form here is the possibility of transmitting the desired value. After selecting vocabulary and structures, students are offered a set of questions that lead them to the correct organization of the text. The undoubted advantage of this approach is the search activity, students learn to select the lexical and grammatical structures necessary to convey this meaning, while simultaneously assimilating them (Camps,2017; Abramson, 2023).

All the approaches described above are product-oriented. An approach that focuses on the process of writing the text itself (Process Approach) is proposed within the framework of the communicative methodology of teaching a foreign language. It is emphasized that writing is a complex skill that includes many skills related to determining the purpose of writing a text, satisfying the reader's requests and the process of writing a text itself. In addition, the content, its relevance, organization, coherence and originality are important. The skills of selecting linguistic components appropriate to the task, such as grammar and vocabulary, also need to be purposefully formed. Let's also note the mechanics of writing, that is, handwriting, spelling and punctuation. From these positions, the process of mastering written speech is so complex that it comes to the fore in comparison with the final product.

Another Example of Analyses

The process can be divided into several stages. At the preliminary stage, ideas are generated, information is collected, knowledge is updated; here students prepare for writing. Techniques used for this purpose include surveys, discussions, debates. At this stage, free writing can be useful, because it allows you to concentrate on generating ideas, leaving aside the question of the quality of the text. Brainstorming is also indispensable, which makes it possible to graphically present the collected ideas and organize them (Caplan,2012).

The planning stage implies the ordering of the content. The tools at this stage can be drawing up a plan, group writing, arranging the text in a logical order. Graphic organizers, such as Venn diagrams, mental maps, clusters, also help organize and illustrate thoughts.

At the next stage, a draft version of the text is created. The focus is on the development and improvement of ideas and their linguistic representation. Further, the content and structure are refined, when self- and mutual assessment play an important role, because they give students the opportunity to look at their work through the prism of established criteria or compare it with the work of a peer. The text can be modified the required number of times, and only in the latest edition the student concentrates on such superficial characteristics as spelling or grammatical accuracy.

The approach to writing, centered on the process, prepares the student to work independently on the text, giving him the tools and sequence of actions to create it. In the future, the student will be able to independently, without the support of a teacher, create a text and evaluate it. Among the positive aspects of this approach are the communicative act at the exit, the discovery of new language forms for the student, the development of educational and cognitive skills, such as the ability to analyze and graphically organize information, plan text, work with criteria for self- and mutual evaluation, etc. However, it should be noted that some students prefer a more structured approach, i.e. the presence of supports. Working on draft versions can take a significant amount of time, individual for each individual student.

Thus, different approaches to writing have their own strengths, which can also be used when teaching academic writing.

As we can see, some approaches allow you to clearly structure the learning process, teach the organization of the text, allow you to expand your vocabulary and achieve grammatical accuracy. Others give the teacher the opportunity to develop educational and cognitive skills and educate independent writers. Thus, the use of a combination of different approaches in teaching academic writing makes it more effective(Sangamitra,2016).

Controlled-to-free approach - The possibility of consistent practice in creating text elements; - intensive work on the organization of the text; - the development of poorly developed skills; - the presence of supports - Excessive focus on the form; - there is no opportunity for creativity

Free-writing approach - Removes the fear of writing; - develops fluency when writing; - develops the habit of writing - Is not suitable for teaching students with a low level of language proficiency; - ignoring the grammatical side of speech

Paragraph-pattern approach - Literacy development; - intensive work on the paragraph structure - Excessive focus on the form; - there is no opportunity for creativity

Grammar-syntax-organization approach -Students are motivated and engaged; - a connection is established between the form, meaning and content; - involuntary assimilation of language forms occurs; - Insufficient work on the organization of the text

Process approach - Simulates the process of creating text in real life; - takes into account the requests of a potential audience (including the register and the level of language training); - teaches the creation of text in several stages (preparation - writing - evaluation - processing - creation of a finishing version); - develops independence and other educational and cognitive skills - Takes a lot of classroom time; - lack of supports.

Here is an example of how it is possible to combine tasks and approaches when working on the primary text. We propose the stages of creating a cause-effect essay, which gives the causes of a phenomenon and possible consequences (adapted from). V.N. Nazarova lists the pedagogical conditions in which effective teaching of academic writing takes place. At the same time, the development of writing skills should be based on research and communication competencies. Therefore, at first students work with an approximate essay (reading), analyze its structure, highlighting the thesis (thesis statement) in the introduction, as well as sentences bearing the main idea in each paragraph (topic sentences) (Md.Kamrul, 2013).

Next, work is carried out with the content, cause-and-effect relationships are identified, and their graphical representation is created. The language specific to logical connections of this type is analyzed, which is subsequently trained in conditionally communicative and communicative situations (Nunan,1991).

After that, students choose a topic for their own essay and make a schematic representation of the cause-and-effect relationships presented in it. If necessary, background knowledge on the topic is updated with the acquisition of additional information.

Then an essay plan is drawn up, a thesis is written, lexical units and structures that are appropriate to use in the text are selected. After that, students discuss their ideas in pairs or groups. If there are problems with expressing thoughts, both peers and a teacher come to the rescue. When assessing each other, the student asks three questions, noting two strengths and

one weakness of the peer's plan. The formulations of the theses are discussed frontally and possible options for their improvement are proposed.

The last step is writing an essay according to the plan. The finished product can be subjected to self- or mutual evaluation in accordance with the specified criteria and processed (King,2017).

Discussion

So, the analysis of the text, its deconstruction in the logical and linguistic sense ends with the synthesis of its own work. The presence of a sample allows the student to see in advance the goal to which he will come after the lesson. Despite the focus on the final product, the process includes communicative tasks and exercises that show the student the process of its creation. Subsequently, when performing such a task independently, the student will be able to independently go through all the steps described above. It is also necessary to note the language support provided to the student, which, from our point of view, is important in conditions of limited contact with the language being studied.

Here is an example of writing a secondary text - an annotation that has a fairly fixed structure and volume. Both students and teaching staff of Kazakhstani universities have difficulties writing annotations, in most cases trying to arrange them as a direct translation of an analog in Russian. Since writing an abstract is an important skill for a person functioning in an academic environment, the formation of this skill is devoted to a lesson in the course "English for Academics", the author of this article participated in the creation of which (Maley,2009).

At the motivational stage, students discuss what an abstract is, for what purposes and for what audience it can be created. The main work begins with the analysis of the annotation and the derivation of its structure. We emphasize that students work independently, while the teacher plays the role of a facilitator. Further work is carried out on the speech structures inherent in each element of the annotation, academic vocabulary and collocations are also in focus. It is important to pay attention to the words-bundles that allow you to logically link the elements of the annotation.

Working with the structure

1. Identification of the content elements of the structure
2. Recognition of elements in the text

3. Identification of functional phrases peculiar to each of the elements and linguistic features of annotations from different sciences (for example, the use of passive voice, characteristic of natural science annotations) (Walsh,2010).

The exercises are designed in such a way that students themselves notice these features, and then use this information in tasks, the complexity and openness of which are gradually increasing. The final product is an abstract in English to your own article; it is also subject to mutual evaluation according to clearly defined criteria and is processed in accordance with the comments of colleagues.

Thus, on the one hand, students "experience" the process of writing an abstract and can subsequently go through it again without the support of a teacher. On the other hand, they receive support in the form of structural elements and speech patterns that help to build the process of writing a text, to achieve coherence and consistency. In addition, the vocabulary is enriched with academic vocabulary and collocations, which contributes to understanding the

peculiarities of the functioning of lexical units and functional phrases in the context and their appropriate use. In general, there is a development of general cultural competencies, such as the ability to evaluate work, to analyze and synthesize, and to plan activities (Vandrick,2003).

Conclusion

The learning process today is becoming closely linked with a real opportunity for university graduates to integrate into the international scientific environment, where they will need to show not just language knowledge, but also research skills. In this process, special attention has been paid in recent years to written communication in the form of scientific articles, reports, and business reports. This makes the task of developing students' foreign language academic skills extremely relevant.

Creating a written text is a complex process that requires the simultaneous application of many skills. These skills - not only linguistic, but also educational and cognitive - need to be formed and developed, and the task of the teacher is to choose the most effective approaches and tasks for the successful solution of this problem. In our experience, it is the combination of the possibilities of various approaches, taking into account the needs of students, that provides optimal conditions for the development of writing skills in the context of an English course for academic purposes. A reasonable combination of techniques offered by various approaches makes it possible to neutralize their shortcomings and profitably use their advantages.

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