

Writing in English for academic purposes

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Introduction

Gyula Tankó's *Professional writing: The academic context* is primarily a textbook for students who are enrolled in an English-speaking programme at university level and have to produce academic texts in English; moreover, it is also a long-needed resource book on writing academic texts in English for a wider range of academic audience. Learning to write in a foreign language means more than merely transferring the skill from one's mother tongue to the foreign language; hence, it is a skill that should be explicitly taught and practised. For this reason, English majors at universities at the beginning of their studies are obliged to enrol in seminar and lecture courses on academic writing. The present textbook provides an important, yet so far unavailable supplement for these courses in general and for the courses held at the English Language and Literature BA programme at Eötvös Loránd University in particular.

Structure and content of the book

The book is divided into eleven chapters, which logically build on one another starting from the first steps of the writing process (idea generation techniques and outlining in chapter 2, the paragraph in chapter 3, coherence and cohesion in chapter 4, genre and text type in chapter 5, and argumentation techniques in chapter 6), to constructing specific texts, such as academic essays and research papers (in chapter 7 and 8). This type of approach to learning to write in a foreign language is useful and widespread as first the audience is familiarised with the building blocks of academic texts; then, it is demonstrated how these building blocks can be used to form shorter and eventually longer texts (e.g., research papers).

The innovative nature of the book lies in four features that do not generally appear together in such detail in books of similar nature: the detailed theoretical description of argumentation, the overview of writing research papers, the emphasis on using sources, and the description of the summarisation process. First of all, the theory of argumentation and its techniques are generally rarely mentioned in English for Academic Purposes textbooks or course books, albeit being the core of successful writing in English. In the present book, the chapter on argumentation is the most elaborate one, and it embeds the phenomenon in an extended context. Argumentation and refutation strategies are both explained and illustrated quite clearly thus allowing the reader to understand how the purpose of persuasion is achieved in academic writing.

The second noteworthy feature of the book is the chapter devoted to research papers. University students are typically required to conduct research throughout their studies. In

philology, these studies are primarily theoretical in nature; nonetheless, while reading for academic purposes, students do come across both theoretical and empirical research. Hence, it is quite crucial that students familiarise themselves with these. Through comparing and contrasting the two genres, the author provides a very accessible approach to identifying the important parts of research papers and the information contained within them.

Thirdly, the use of sources is also a key issue in academic writing and is paid special attention to in all academic programs in English-speaking countries. As such, it is also given ample attention here. Plagiarism is described in detail and the reader is provided with a clear overview of using different documentation systems (MLA, APA, etc.), along with a list of websites to consult for further assistance. Considering the fact that the book is primarily intended as a textbook, more examples would have been useful to complement the descriptions of citation techniques; nevertheless, the explanations are clear and the reader should have no trouble following the guidelines.

The fourth and most innovative part of the book is the chapter on summary writing. It includes not only the description of paraphrasing and summarising techniques, but it also introduces the reader to the concept of guided summary writing. The illustration of this task is exceptionally detailed and useful for those learning to write summaries with specific foci. In fact, this skill, as pointed out by the author, is necessary when writing involves library research. What could have been even more useful are particular guidelines as to how to integrate summarised texts or points from several sources into one's writing.

The explanations throughout the book are generally accessible for the intended audience. The author draws on extensive discourse literature from Hungarian as well as international experts to explain and illustrate his points. He provides an additional bibliography at the end, which can be useful for those wishing to read more on the topics discussed in the chapters. Tables and figures also scaffold understanding, and sample texts are good points of reference for those learning to write in English for academic purposes.

Throughout the book key words and important notions are highlighted; thus, the reader can easily scan the text for relevant information and also obtain the gist of a section at a glance. Examples and tasks found at the end of particular sections and chapters further enhance understanding. Nonetheless, the book is reminiscent of supplementary materials: certain points warrant more examples and at other times explanations seem too technical or insufficiently elaborate, given the lack of the potential audience's background on discourse analysis. These, the lack of a glossary of useful terms, and the fact that no key is provided for the tasks render the book more ideal for classroom use than for self-study.

Conclusion

Gyula Tankó's book is an essential read that accompanies the author's lecture course on academic writing. It is also recommended for anyone interested in writing academic texts in English; it is especially but not exclusively useful for university students pursuing their studies on an English language programme, aiming to study abroad in an English-speaking country, or thinking about obtaining an advanced language certificate which has a writing component. With the help of the guidelines presented in the book, the reader can obtain a higher level of competence in writing, and as a participant of the international academic community become more successful at producing academic texts in English. Finally, particular sections can also be an enticing and fruitful read for those embarking research in the field of written discourse analysis investigating academic texts.