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Effectiveness of Academic Writing teaching in Master's program

This article provides the system of work directed to forming of skills and development of abilities of the academic writing of non-linguistic specialties master students of higher educational institutions. These skills are demanded in the documents of the international organizations and the state educational standards of higher education of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the basis of the analysis of requirements to competences of teaching engineer master's program. The article considers: 1) the system of exercises focused on consecutive development of abilities of master students' writing since elementary level of mastering a foreign language; 2) abilities of writing sentences and paragraphs in English; 3) the correct essay writing which covers a) writing of introduction with inclusion of the hook, connecting information and thesis statement; b) conclusion writing with use of the sentence, opinion, or prediction. This system was approved in professional English classes of master students at L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University and showed the outstanding efficiency.

Keywords: professional English, academic writing, master students, English for Academic Purposes, non – linguistic specialties, essays, introduction, conclusion.

With Kazakhstan's participation in the Bologna process L. N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University develops three-level programs for bachelor, master and doctoral students. The modern education is targeted to develop key competencies of future professionals. Future bachelor and master students of L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University are prepared to the following types of professional activity: industrial, technological, organizational, managerial, scientific, academic, and project-based. To be successful in these activities, students must have the following cultural and professional competences:

- To have command of a foreign language for the purposes of business and professional communication;
- To be able to use language in speech and writing;
- To be able to make up and edit texts for the professional use;
- To be able to learn and analyze the necessary information, technical data, and the results, classify and summarize them;
- To be able to prepare scientific and technical reports, and research publications;
- To be able to describe the action principles, devices, developed products and accessories from the innovative point of view [1; 95].

The University faculty aims to achieve educational standard goals. With the account of the above documents and requirements of the main educational programs, we believe it is necessary to develop a system of exercises designed to develop academic writing skills of non-linguistic master students.

The ability to make up written texts for students who study English as a foreign language has appeared to be one of the most difficult tasks. There are a number of reasons:

- The focus is made on speaking, listening, and reading;
- Lecturers may feel confused about their writing skills and try to avoid such type of speaking activity.

However, we cannot exclude from our work such component of foreign language teaching since writing teaching at all levels enables to:

- Develop all types of speaking;
- Develop own style of teaching;
- Master the art of literate writing;
- Be professionally and scientifically active in the world arena;

Exercises used in foreign language teaching vary subject to students' proficiency. Let us take non-linguistic students as an example. In order for them to properly express their thoughts in writing, we have to teach them:

- Writing and using in professional context lexical items like nouns denoting phenomena and objects of professional field, verbs denoting process, adjectives denoting characteristics of professional objects;
- Construct sentences, from compound to complex ones;

- Follow paragraph and text rules;
- Letter-writing (personal and official letters, addressing envelopes and cards) subject to socio-cultural norms of letter-writing (style, form, phrases, clichés, and structure);
- Essay-writing. The shift to the three-level educational system necessitated teaching this difficult piece of writing.

In addition, let us start with our student audience. We work with non-linguistic specialties students for whom English is not a core subject. Therefore, English class hours are very limited. Moreover, students - future professionals have used not to pay enough attention to the study of a foreign language at the stage of schooling, and 90 % technical high schools enrollees have elementary level of language skills and feel a lack of motivation to study it. We take it into account when we select methods and techniques for writing teaching. Since the language proficiency level of our students is very low, in our work we use a system of sequential writing skills development, starting from the word level up to complex texts such as essays [2].

In this paper, we describe a system of exercises aimed at the gradual development of master students' writing skills. Let us start with teaching the correct construction of sentences for elementary level students:

Our students, Kazakh and Russian-speaking people, translate their thoughts first in Kazakh / Russian sentences and only then find an English equivalent to the Kazakh/ Russian sentence by starting with the grammatical structure and ending with the lexical and phonetic syntagma content. An English sentence differs by a fixed word order. With a view to improving sentence construction skills of students, we use the following exercises:

1) Translation from Kazakh/Russian to English.

Students often make mistakes when translating Kazakh/Russian sentences in English; very often, they construct sentences according to their native language grammar rules by forgetting English fixed words order. At this stage, it is important to be attentive to both writing the words and constructing sentences in accordance with the English grammar rules.

2) Put the word in a sentence in the correct order. It can be exclamatory, declarative and interrogative sentences.

Example: *you / work / to / when / independently / out / carrying / need / to / research - When carrying out research, you need to work independently.*

3) Divide a sentence in parts:

Example: *Define the subject and predicate in the following sentences:*

Let us now pass a plane xy through point A normal to the axis z .

4) Mistake correction. There can be different mistakes:

a) Punctuation and title mistakes:

Example: *What are the first two steps in research? - What are the first two steps in research?*

b) Subject and predicate coordination mistakes:

Example: *The student create a working title. - The student creates a working title.*

Once students have mastered the sentence construction in accordance with English sentence rules, we proceed to paragraph writing. First we'll find out what we mean by this piece of writing. There are many definitions of a paragraph.

In our work, we consider a paragraph as a series of sentences that are organized and coherent.

A paragraph composes of three main parts: the topic sentence, the body, and the concluding sentence. [3; 39]

A topic sentence is a sentence, which states the main idea of a paragraph. It usually comes at the beginning of a paragraph.

A body paragraph is a group of related sentences about the main topic or idea. Each of the body sentences should be related to the topic sentence. The body sentence may contain details of the information or examples provided in the topic sentence to support the idea of the topic sentence.

A concluding sentence usually comes at the end of a paragraph. This is brief information set out in paragraph. Some paragraphs, particularly short ones, do not have a concluding sentence. In our work at paragraph structure and writing, we use the following exercises:

1) Paragraph review

Read the paragraph and answer the questions:

Today, science and technology are closely related. Many modern technologies such as nuclear power and space flights depend on science and the application of scientific knowledge and principles. Each advance in pure science creates new opportunities for the development of new ways of making things to be used

in daily life. In turn, technology provides science with new and more accurate instruments for its investigation and research.

1. How many sentences are in this paragraph? - 4.

2. What is the main topic of this paragraph? - Many modern technologies such as nuclear power and space flights depend on science and the application of scientific knowledge and principles.

3. What is the topic sentence? - Today, science and technology are closely related.

Remember that the topic sentence tells the main idea of the whole paragraph.

4. What is the concluding sentence? - In turn, technology provides science with new and more accurate instruments for its investigation and research.

2) The work on the topic sentence

Example:

1. Read each paragraph and three topic sentences below it. Then choose the best topic sentence and write it on the line. Read the paragraph again. Make sure that the topic sentence gives the main idea for the whole paragraph.

3) The work on the body paragraph

Here it is crucial for each sentence to be connected to the topic sentence, **support an idea, add details or give examples of the topic sentence ideas.**

Example:

1. Read each paragraph carefully. Underline the topic sentence. In each paragraph, one supporting sentence does not belong because it is not directly connected to the topic sentence. It does not fit the ideas in the paragraph. Put parentheses () around the one sentence that does not belong.

4) The work on the concluding sentence

The concluding sentence usually briefly summarizes the paragraph. In many cases, the topic sentence information is in some way repeated in the concluding sentence. However, it may be a sentence, an opinion, or a prediction.

Example:

1. Read each paragraph. Then read the concluding sentences below it. Circle the letter of the best concluding sentence.

5) Writing own paragraph on the given theme

Once students have mastered the technique of constructing sentences and paragraphs in English, we proceed to making up topical texts.

Furthermore, we want to share a system of exercises that we use in teaching essay writing. First, let us start with what we mean under this piece of writing.

We adhere to definition of the essay in our paper like — «a short written composition, collection of paragraphs which represents the facts, author's opinion and the ideas on one subject or another. Subjects can be various — from the description of walk on the beach to discussion for (or against) increases in taxes». «The majority of the academic essays differ on length from 5 to 10 and more than 10 pages». [4; 21] The essay «essai» in translation from French «attempt», «test», «sketch», from Latin exagium «weighing» — the genre of criticism, literary criticism which is characterized by a free interpretation of any problem. There are many ways of writing the essay. The method which is chosen for writing is mostly often based on an essay subject. It is necessary to take into account what type of the essay will transfer the ideas of the author in the clearest way. Keytfol's (Keith S. False) allocates several standard types of the essay [5; 11]:

- Narrative essay
- Comparative essay
- Cause/effect essay
- Argumentative essay
- Process- analysis essay

But, despite variety of types of the essay, they all possess the general structure. Each essay, irrespective of type it belongs, includes in the structure:

- Introduction
- Main part
- Conclusion

Each of the listed above parts includes from one to three paragraphs in the structure. Usually, introduction and conclusion consist of one paragraph while the main part includes three paragraphs. In turn, there is a set of ways of training to write each part of the essay, irrespective of its type. Here are some examples of ex-

ercises of working on each part of the essay. Introduction represents only one paragraph for many types of the essay and this paragraph consists of three parts:

1. Hook
2. Connecting information
3. Thesis statement

It is not simple to write a good hook, it demands a training and extraordinary approach. One can use following exercises:

1. Ask a question. If the reader wants to learn the answer to a question which he "has hooked" then he will read the whole essay.

For example, it is possible to begin the essay about need of introduction of more strict policy of the state regulation in the sphere of medicines sale with this question:

How many people take medicine — even simple aspirin — every day?

2. Use an interesting observation. For example: Asian economists aren't sleeping well these days. This observation forces readers to learn why economists sleep badly. This catch leads to the main idea of the essay which will distinguish three basic reasons of economic downturn in Asia.

3. It is possible to use unique scenario to capture attention of the reader. For example: Travelling at more than one hundred miles an hour, he feels as though he isn't moving. He is engulfed in complete silence. For a moment, it is as if he has entered another dimension. — This essay is about an exciting sport – skydiving.

4. Begin with the well-known quote. Study this example: «I have a dream»

Many readers can think that this quote leads to a further reasoning on Martin Luther King's life and his fight. Actually, this catch begins the essay on a subject of structure of a dream.

5. Use the surprising or shocking statistics. For example, Over 20,000 people in the United States are killed in alcohol-related traffic accidents every year. If world temperature continues to rise, Singapore and New York may be under water by the year 2050.

The next stage of the essay is teaching to write connecting information from the hook to the main/thesis statement. Connecting information includes three to five sentences which help to direct the reader on the essay topic. These sentences can be background information on the subject or examples.

It must be noted that one shouldn't pass on to a subject at once. First, it is necessary to present that the reader already knows about a subject, then, to fill gaps, what the reader already knows and what he needs to know on this subject. It is very important to know your reading audience when you write the essay.

Further, we pass on to the main statement to the thesis statement (thesis statement). The main statement or thesis situation formulates the main idea of the essay and reports how information will be organized. The thesis statement defines the main idea you want to present and conveys what moments will be explained and confirmed in the main part of the essay. The thesis statement is a project of the essay. Many thesis statements include the idea about an essay topic, then the general basis, in support of the idea or a view point. Below, the example from the essay «Against E-Voting» is provided and its thesis statement accurately formulates the author's instance: «In particular, I believe that we shouldn't vote with computers or other electronic media». The author finishes the thesis statement, explaining the reason in support of the opinion:

«because democracy is too important to cede to the unreliability of cyberspace».

The following stage is work on the confirming statement (supporting statements) or the main part of the essay (body).

The confirming statements in the essay are the main part of the essay (body). The confirming sentences always belong to the key sentence (topic sentence) of the paragraph. In the main part of the essay, the author explains and confirms the ideas or viewpoints he has formulated in the thesis statement. In the good essay, the main part has to develop the thesis statement, so, that the reader can understand the author's point of view completely. Generally confirming statements represent the examples, the reasons or the bases, the facts or more characteristic or peculiar information on an essay subject. Without these sentences the essay turns into the general description or the review.

One of the ways of making the confirming information in the main part of the essay clear is to use suitable transitional words, or linking words. They help the reader to follow the ideas of the essay. They can be separate words, such as but, this and although; or phrases like in addition, as a result, for these reasons.

The main part of the essay consists of three or four paragraphs between the introduction and the conclusion. The main part of the essay usually follows the plan of the organization determined by the author before he begins to write. This organization differs depending on a type of the essay.

The next stage is work on the conclusion. It is important for the essay to have a good conclusion. Introduction and conclusion often contain the identical ideas and words. For some students writing conclusion is the most difficult part of the essay, for others, on the contrary, it is the simplest thing. When writing the conclusion it is important to follow the following principles:

1. Demonstrate your reader that this is a conclusion. You can highlight the conclusion with some transitions or connectors in order to make it clear for the reader that it is the last part of the essay. For example: In conclusion; from the information given; to summarize. Sometimes the first sentence of the conclusion formulates the main idea or thesis statement again: As previously noted, there are numerous problems that new parents face today.

2. Don't include any new information in the conclusion. The conclusion has to help the reader to comprehend the main ideas you have presented in the essay. Therefore, any new information in the conclusion will sound as continuation of the main part of the essay.

3. For many authors it is difficult to write the conclusion. It demands huge work, creative approach and concentration as well as writing of a good hook and main statement. The type of the essay defines the way of ending the essay; however the ideas given below can be helpful in writing the essay conclusion:

A. The last sentences represent the offer of any idea, opinion or a prediction on an essay subject [6; 21]:

Sentence: In order for young people to successfully learn a language, parents need to encourage them at an early age.

Opinion: Learning a second language at an early age is, in effect a smart choice.

Prediction: If more young people were bilingual, perhaps they would better understand the complex world around them.

B. Sometimes the last sentence suggests that the question discussed in the essay with a large number of supporting facts that the answer is absolutely clear.

Once aware of this information, any reader would agree that bilingual education is an excellent educational opportunity.

It is better to change content and style of the conclusion; however the conclusion usually comes to an end with the sentence expressing the offer (suggestion), opinion, or a prediction. The author assumes what has to be done now, or the author offers final opinion on a subject, or forecasts what happens further. Without the conclusion the essay looks incomplete.

In this article we described the system of work in academic writing teaching of master students. This system of systematic development of skills has been effective in teaching master students. If necessary, it is possible to use only elements of this system, for example, only the exercises applied in teaching to writing sentences, paragraphs or essay.

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Д.Қ. Құрманбаева, Г.З. Тажитова, Н.С. Қасымбекова

Магистранттар бағдарламасында академиялық жазуға оқытудың тиімділігі

Мақалада халықаралық ұйымдардың және Қазақстан Республикасы жоғарғы кәсіби білім берудің мемлекеттік білім беру стандарттарында қамтылған жоо кәсіби мамандықтарының магистратура бағдарламасына қойылатын талаптарына сәйкес тілдік емес мамандықтардың магистранттарының академиялық жазу іскерліктерін қалыптастыруға бағытталған жұмыс жүйесі қарастырылған. Мақала төмендегі мәселелерді қарастырады: 1) магистранттардың шет тілін меңгеруінің бастапқы деңгейінен бастап жазу дағдыларын дамытуға бағытталған жаттығулар жүйесі; 2) ағылшын тілінде сөйлемдер мен азат жол жазу техникасын меңгеру; 3) дұрыс эссе жазу, оның ішінде: а) оқырманның ынтасын аударып отырып, байланыстырушы ақпаратты және негізгі тезистік ойды пайдаланып, кіріспе жазу; ә) ұсынысты, негізгі ойды және болжамды қолдана отырып, қорытынды жазу. Ұсынылып отырған жүйе Л.Н.Гумилев атындағы Еуразия ұлттық университетінің магистратура бөлімінің кәсіби шетел тілі сабақтарында қолданылып, жоғары тиімділік деңгейін көрсетті.

Кілт сөздер: кәсіби ағылшын тілі, академиялық жазу, магистранттар, академиялық мақсаттарға арналған ағылшын тілі, тілдік емес мамандықтар, эссе, кіріспе, қорытынды.

Д.К. Курманбаева, Г.З. Тажитова, Н.С. Қасымбекова

Эффективность академического письма в учебной программе для магистрантов

На основе анализа требований к компетенциям профессиональных инженеров и выпускников инженерных программ вузов, содержащихся в документах международных организаций и государственных образовательных стандартах высшего профессионального образования Республики Казахстан по подготовке магистров, авторами представлена система работы, направленная на формирование навыков и развитие умений академического письма магистрантов неязыкового вуза. В данной статье описаны: 1) система упражнений, ориентированная на последовательное развитие умений письма магистрантов начиная с элементарного уровня владения иностранным языком; 2) овладение техникой построения предложений и абзацев на английском языке; 3) правильное написание эссе, в котором затронуты: а) написание введения с включением зацепки, соединительной информации и основного/тезисного высказывания; б) написание заключения с использованием предложения, мнения или предсказания. Предложенная система была апробирована на практических занятиях по профессиональному английскому языку с магистрантами Евразийского национального университета им. Л.Н. Гумилева и показала свою высокую эффективность.

Ключевые слова: профессиональный английский язык, академическое письмо, магистранты, английский язык для академических целей, неязыковые специальности, эссе, введение, заключение.

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