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Fostering academic written discourse in University: from theory to practice

The article considers the problem of the formation of academic written discourse of students from the standpoint of modern foreign language teaching theory; analyzes the nature and structure of the academic written discourse and put forward the idea that the basis for the formation of academic literacy is the notion of academic discourse. Academic Written Discourse is described in terms of modern level of basic standard of student.

Key words: academic literacy, meta-disciplinary competence, cognitive practice, social practice, academic written discourse.

Nowadays, an important factor in the formation of students' research competence becomes account of the increasing role of the English language as a tool of scientific communication [1; 25]. Therefore, in the modern high school teaching of written academic discourse in English includes the creation of scientific and professional texts, as well as written language learning in some subjects taught in English. Teaching written academic discourse in English is traditionally taught within the framework of discipline «Foreign Language» [2; 178] or specialized courses in academic writing [3; 30]. Subject experts pay more and more attention to teaching written speech [4; 115]. We believe that the growing role of foreign language competence of the specialist requires a review of the theoretical foundations and approaches to teaching writing in modern high school. This article defends the thesis that the possession of written language is a meta-competence and a major component of academic written discourse. At the same time teaching written speech should be tailored to the specific educational context: type of high school, professional specialization, particular discipline, learning objectives. We suggest and illustrate the approach to teaching English written speech within the framework of modern foreign language teaching methodology. In the course of the analysis of foreign studies in the area of teaching written speech, it has been revealed that the written language is a central component of academic literacy. It is known that modern model of academic literacy served as a set of skills to read and write; it was focused only on training lagging in studying in high school [5; 664].

In accordance with S.S.Kunanbayeva, within the framework of the modern level of basic standard (LAP, B2), a student should correspond to a level of Common European scale of competence. This means that in written forms of communication students should demonstrate willingness and ability to:

- summarize in written form the content of essays which they had listened or read;
- write an essay with reasoning elements;
- write complicated form of letters, reports, articles and essays, which have a clear and concise structure;
- create a questionnaire-application form.

According to level of Super — Basic Standard (compliance level LSP, C1) modeled forms of written communication are: narrative, description, communication and argumentation. Written and verbal works at the stage of this level are: reports and essays on the socio-political, educational and cross-cultural themes, as well as relying on maxims, proverbs and quotes [6; 332].

This means that students should be able to transfer different types of discourse, i.e., follow verbal rules of each specific type of discourse, to understand its values and the type of identity.

Discourse in its broadest sense — is a social organization of speech activity and texts generated by participants in a particular social group or community [7; 28]. The concept of «academic literacy» is not quite new for our education system. In this context some modern magazines actively focus their attention on the necessity of teaching academic writing [2; 178, 3; 30, 8; 101]. However the attention on written speech (both native and English language) as an important communicative, cognitive, and social practice is still hardly paid.

Formation of *written communicative competence* is the aim of written language teaching, which includes the following components:

- linguistic (language skills);
- discursive (possession of different types of discourse in teaching communicative situations that require a decision subject-cognitive tasks);
- pragmatic (to achieve communicative purposes);
- strategy (awareness of the process of creating a written speech, overcoming communication failures, the ability to avoid failures in the case of a lack of linguistic resources);
- sociocultural (ownership of behavior norms).

Discursive competence manifests itself in the possession of different types of discourse. This aspect of communicative competence involves the ability to connect one statement to another, as well as the ability to logic (sequentially) express thoughts in a situation of written communication [9; 6].

Under the discursive competence some researchers understand the knowledge of how to combine grammatical forms and semantic content, to create a coherent oral or written texts of various genres, operating in different communication situations [10; 1], others see in the discursive competence verbal, non-verbal and paralinguistic skills that contribute to the ability to adequately organize the semantic content of the oral and written text [11; 103].

H.D.Brown defines discursive competence as the ability to connect the passages into discourse and meaningful whole structure of series of statements, at the same time he emphasizes that the discursive competence is implemented at the level of relations between passages [12; 22].

Taking into account these definitions, by the discursive competence we understood the ability to bind the individual passages in micro text through a variety of means of cohesion and build rhetorical structures and compositional speech forms, organizing them in compositional meaningful whole — written text / discourse functioning as a means of written communication.

The content of discursive competence involves the following knowledge:

- knowledge of the basic characteristics of functional styles;
- knowledge of text construction schemes that operate as a means of communication;
- knowledge of ways of rhetorical structures building, compositional voice and genre forms.

Discursive competence involves the following skills:

- ability to use language means in accordance with the type of the text being created;
- skills of creating written text stylistically and correctly.

The basis of discursive competence consists of the following communication skills:

- planning a text;
- prediction of communicative acceptability of language means;
- to structure text according to the functional style and genre forms;
- adjust the total modality of text (to express neutral or emotional communication intentions and semantic content);
- to formulate the communicative purpose of the text;
- to introduce and formulate the theme of the text.

To implement different ways of developing the theme:

- 1) to introduce the main idea of a paragraph with the help of key sentence;
- 2) to develop the main idea, enclosed in the key sentence;
- 3) to transmit the semantic content logically and consistently (to compare, to convey briefly the basic information, to draw a conclusion);
- 4) to build a rhetorical structure and compositional-speech forms, specific for a particular type of text [13; 5].

Formation of the academic written discourse — is not just development of such skills like reading and writing, but a certain way of thinking, suitable for a specific cultural environment. Thus, we can talk about the presence of a discursive model of academic literacy and the importance of written speech as a social practice in the formation of the ability to become a full member of the discourse. Formation written speech skills is directly affecting the academic progress of students and contributes to their successful socialization [14; 47].

We believe that academic literacy is meta-subject competence, certain complex structural formation, which integrates traditional knowledge and intellectual, communicative, ideological skills. The concept of the academic literacy is so broad, that it leads to the problems of developing models of its formation within a specific discipline. In this article Academic Literacy is defined as the ability to transfer the academic written discourse on the basis of foreign language professionally oriented academic texts, critical thinking, improve their self-education competence in academic and professional purposes [15; 29].

General structure of academic literacy is allocated on the basis of the well-known interpretation of competence [16; 34] and media literacy model [17; 34] (Fig. 1). Academic literacy as meta-subject competence consists of three main components (communicative, cognitive, regulatory and behavioral). The Communicative Component includes both Narrow Disciplinary skills (quoting in the discipline, the creation of written texts of certain genres, etc.), and Interdisciplinary skills (academic reading, academic writing and speech, etc.) [18; 55]. The Cognitive Component reflects the social and evaluative aspects of academic literacy: knowledge of the academic community, and critical thinking. Regulatory and Behavioral aspect takes into account the formation of self-reference and reflection, as well as motivation of students.

Academic Literacy		
Communicative Component	Cognitive Component	Regulatory and Behavioral Component
Narrow disciplinary skills (quoting, creation of professional genres of texts) Interdisciplinary skills: reading, writing, speaking, listening comprehension	The knowledge of values of academic discourse (consistent with the values of socialization) and speech genres Critical thinking	Self-competence Motivation Reflection
Core Independence		

Figure 1. Structure of the Academic Literacy, according to N.V.Smironova et. al.

We consider that the basis of an academic literacy formation is teaching the ability to transfer the academic written discourse. Defining the status of the academic written discourse, it is important to take into account its relationship with the scientific and pedagogical types of institutional discourse [19; 46]. Thus A.V.Litvinov [20; 283] notes that there is not only communication between partners of equal status in scientific discourse, but also the tone of communication, typical for educational activities, in which partners' status are different. L.V.Kulikova [21; 15] also notes the interpenetration of the functions and genres of these types of discourse and denotes this phenomenon as a unified system specialized (clichéd) scientific and educational cooperation. V.I.Karasik considers the pedagogical discourse as a special case of the implementation of the scientific discourse [22; 9], where scientific sub-genres are basic and scientific and academic sub-genre is on the periphery of discourse.

The aim of the academic discourse is the socialization of students in the university and its orientation on the generation of new knowledge as a terminal value. Strategy of scientific discourse (doing research, its expertise, implementation in practice) and strategies of pedagogical discourse (explanation, evaluation, control, organization) can be successfully combined for implementation of specific learning objectives. For example, writing a grant proposal is a strategy of scientific discourse, but in teaching situation at the university it will be combined with a pedagogical strategy explanation. Within this learning situation the genre of the text was created. Genre characteristics of scientific text can be combined with texts as a pedagogical and professional discourse. For example, the training part in the scientific workshop while studying in high school will be based on the assimilation of adequate rules of conduct, as well as addressing professional issues under discussion. Consequently, texts of scientific, professional and pedagogical discourses are intertwined.

We assume that academic written discourse involves three types (scientific, professional and pedagogical), accordingly, teaching it to senior students is aimed at the mastery of scientific research, professional, educational and cognitive competencies. Thus, the academic written discourse — is an institutional type of discourse, which suggests integration of three areas of communication and accordingly, interpenetration of three discourses.

The structure of the academic written discourse as the basis of the formation of an academic literacy is shown in the following illustration.

We believe it can be used to develop application model of formation of academic literacy and introduction in the educational process within the framework of teaching certain disciplines.

Academic written discourse		
Communicative Component	Cognitive Component	Regulatory and Behavioral Component
Reading (scientific, professional, educational texts)	The knowledge of key values of academic discourse:	Self-competence
Writing (scientific, professional, educational texts)	The elements of scientific discourse (academic ethics, the culture of professional academic communication, speech genres, legitimate borrowings)	Motivation
Perception (scientific, professional, educational)	Elements of professional discourse (the construction of sociological knowledge, aspects of the professional activity of a sociologist)	Reflection
	Elements of pedagogical discourse (educational and cognitive aspect, the academic progress)	
	Critical thinking	
Core Independence		

Figure 2. Structure of Academic Written Discourse, according to N.V.Smirnova et. al. [15; 41]

On the basis of written speech, reading and writing are communicative, cognitive and social practice the transferring of the academic written discourse (Fig. 2). Thus, written speech is not only a way of communication and social practice, but also a means of developing cognitive abilities of students. In contrast to the traditional understanding of the written text as a chain of statements (and mastering skills of creating a text), the concept of «academic written discourse» makes it possible to take into account the communicative, social and cognitive performance of students in the process of creating a written text and its content.

Under the discourse should be understood a text (s) in close connection with situational context: in a set of social, cultural, historical, ideological, psychological and other factors, with the system of communicative-pragmatic and cognitive facilities of the author purposes, interacts with the addressee, determining special ordering of linguistic units of different levels in text embodiment. Discourse also characterizes the communicative process leading to the formation of a certain formal structure — text [23; 35].

The aim of the academic discourse is the socialization of students in the university and their ability of generation of new knowledge as a terminal value. Strategy of scientific discourse (doing research, its examination, implementation in practice) and strategies of pedagogical discourse (explanation, evaluation, control, organization) can be successfully combined for the implementation of specific educational objectives. For example, writing a grant proposal is a strategy of scientific discourse, but in the teaching process at the university, it will be combined with a pedagogical strategy of explanation. As part of this learning situation a text of this genre is created. Genre characteristics of scientific text can be connected with the context of pedagogical and professional discourse. For example, participation in scientific workshops while studying at high school will be based on the assimilation of adequate rules of behavior, as well as addressing professional issues under discussion. Consequently, texts of scientific, professional and pedagogical discourses are intertwined.

In this article we have tried to consider the role of Academic Written Discourse, Discursive Competence in sample program of foreign language teaching for academic purposes. It is obvious, that in order make successful course of academic writing in English, and there should be serious preliminary humanitarian training of students in the field of Russian and English literature, logic, rhetoric, and familiarity with the basics of scientific work.

In this sense, it is important to put the Academic Writing in English in a fundamentally different context: it should not be seen as a further linguistic discipline, but as a professional cycle course.

Practice has shown that the real level of the students does not always meet these requirements. And finally, perhaps the most important thing is Academic Writing course, that can be considered valid if the participants perceive it as a creative laboratory, which allows them to generate and discover new meanings. It involves a certain spirit of collegiality and participation in the common cause, which, perhaps, is the highest meaning of pedagogy.

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Университеттік академиялық жазбаша дискурс қалыптастыруы: теориядан тәжірибеге

Мақалада студенттердің академиялық сауаттылығының қалыптасуы және жазуға үйренуі теория және практика тұрғысынан қарастырылды; академиялық сауаттылығының сипаты мен құрылымы талданды және академиялық дискурс ұғымы академиялық сауаттылығының негізінде жатыр деген тезис ұсынылды. Академиялық жазу дискурсы студенттің негізгі стандарттылығының заманауи деңгейі тұрғысынан берілген.

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Формирование академического письменного дискурса в университете: от теории к практике

В статье рассмотрена проблема формирования академической грамотности студентов и обучения письму с позиций теории и практики; проанализированы природа и структура академической грамотности и выдвинут тезис о том, что в основе формирования академической грамотности лежит понятие академического дискурса. Академический письменный дискурс описан с точки зрения современного уровня базовой стандартности студента.

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