

Educational Paradigm of Academic Writing

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Abstract. The article reveals the concept of academic writing educational paradigm, which is made up of several different didactic aspects to be taken into account in planning and organising the learning process. The aim of the article is to make an overview of these aspects in order to show how academic writing can be incorporated in the existing higher educational curricula, in particular the foreign language course, and to design an effective didactic mechanism of academic writing acquisition. The authors formulate the major principles of organising and implementing the training process, the most important being the competence-and-activity-based approach to teaching, relying on the competence-based model of academic writing worked out by the authors and applying the step-by-step strategy of training. Regarding academic writing as a long process of knowledge, abilities and skills acquisition in which further development always relies on previous achievements allows the authors to presuppose that there are certain corner stones on the way to academic writing competence formation. These are writing a scientific essay, writing a synopsis and writing a research article, which are sequential elements of the paradigm. Correspondingly, the competence in research article writing can be acquired successfully on the basis of similar verbal activities which have very close competence-based patterns. This supposition is confirmed by the results of the experiment in which the students failed to write a research article without special training and wrote a scientific essay instead because they could rely on the skill of essay writing available in their verbal experience. The analysis carried out by the authors allows them to conclude that the way to academic writing, which is rather long and complicated, requires profound understanding of its educational paradigm for implementing the training process within the framework of the higher educational foreign language course.

Keywords: academic writing, educational paradigm, competence-and-activity-based approach, competence-based model, step-by-step strategy of training, sequential elements of educational paradigm.

Cite as: Dudnik, L.V., Putilovskaya, T.S. (2020). Educational Paradigm of Academic Writing. *Vyshee obrazovanie v Rossii = Higher Education in Russia*. Vol. 29, no. 1, pp. 88-97.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31992/0869-3617-2020-29-1-88-97>

Introduction

There is no denying the present-day role of academic writing as a specific type of verbal activity related to scientific and professional com-

munication and scientific research. Although the term itself appeared comparatively not long ago [1], it has already passed a long way from a somewhat skeptical attitude to its significance to

a wide acceptance in scientific and educational circles. Today, almost nobody doubts that academic writing is an integral part of higher educational paradigm. It is a complex type of mental, speech and communication activity which encompasses a lot of different sophisticated competencies and mental abilities required for a scientific research worker, any kind of educationalist and even a student of any level of higher education. This is mainly due to the integration of science and education, and the trend towards creating third generation Universities [2], which we are witness to worldwide. It is exactly what we can see in Russia where the best higher educational institutions are doing their utmost to become scientific research centres to meet the 21st century requirements.

The educational paradigm of academic writing includes a wide scope of aspects some of which have been thoroughly studied and widely accepted and a number of debatable issues in which specialists can hardly reach any agreement on. Didactic aspects which constitute the core of the educational paradigm require special attention and are still to be analysed, discussed and organized although a lot has been achieved in this area. Didactic issues seem to be the most important area of research because they can serve as the basis for launching a full-size learning process.

The first aim of this article is to make an overview of didactic aspects in order to know and understand the whole scope of ideas related to academic writing and how to put into practice the research findings in this area. The article is also aimed at showing how academic writing can be incorporated into the existing higher educational curricula.

Brief analysis of educational paradigm

In order to work out an effective educational programme of academic writing aimed at launching the training process we need to answer *four basic questions* which are supposed to help build up the concept: 1. What to teach? 2. Whom to teach? 3. Where to teach? 4. How to teach?

The answer to *the first question* seems to be quite evident. It is academic writing, which includes a wide scope of different types of scientific writing: a scientific essay, a research article, a scientific paper (book), a conference paper, a synopsis, a thesis, etc. In addition, some written products, such as an abstract or a summary, require additional written statements, which is necessary for a scientific paper to be published. Each type of writing is quite specific and requires purposeful and specially organized training procedures at different stages of the learning process. But any type of academic writing is based on the fundamental skills of logical and linguistic analysis of the text as the product of speech activity which are formed by means of academic reading at the initial stages of higher education. Besides, academic writing skills are supposed to be developed alongside with academic speaking skills. For example, give a talk at a conference (academic presentation) is followed by writing a short article for a specific type of publication usually referred to as conference proceedings. In other words, academic writing cannot be regarded as the only element of training. Any kind of training is effective when it relies on balanced development of all the types of speech activity. So, the exact answer to the first question is "All the types of speech activity for academic purposes should be taught in parallel with each other."

The answer to *the second question* is also apparent. All categories of students involved in higher education are to be taught academic competencies: those who undergo training for the bachelor's degree, for the master's degree, and postgraduate students. Only several years ago it was not so evident that academic writing would become an essential element of training bachelors. But the recent developments in the area of education and science and new upgraded requirements the of Federal State Educational Standards (3++) show that the sooner we start developing academic competencies the better the result would be. A great number of present-day school leavers are very well prepared to acquire different skills necessary to conduct

scientific research during their course of studies and later on. Their interest in scientific activities is constantly growing, and they are ready to take part in various events organized for students in a lot of higher educational institutions such as scientific conferences, round-the-table discussions, projects and different types of competitions. If bachelors are involved in scientific research activities, they are more likely to take up a master's course or become postgraduate students.

Asking *the third question* we naturally mean a University discipline on the curriculum dealing with academic competencies, academic writing in particular. The most prominent researchers of academic writing [3; 4] believe that the most effective way is to introduce a new discipline called "Academic writing" which can become one of the most fundamental University subjects. On the one hand, it is quite reasonable to have such a subject on the curriculum. But, on the other, academic competencies are very close to the higher education foreign language course especially in Universities which train economists, managers, and entrepreneurs. Besides the general language course, the programme involves acquiring the language of business and professional communication. During this course students acquire quite a number of rules and norms of verbal behaviour to be followed, which are far beyond learning a foreign language. It is noteworthy that the theme of one of the conferences recently organized by the Centre of Foreign Languages and Cross-cultural Communication at the Department of Economics of Moscow State University, Oxford University Press and the company RELOD was "Far Beyond Simply English: Professional Approaches to Training Professionals". The speakers touched upon a lot of different skills and competencies which are really quite universal and fundamental and are known to be formed and developed alongside with language acquisition [5].

So, *one of the arguments* for developing academic writing skills as one of the aspects of a foreign language higher education training

course is actually the competence-based approach to teaching this subject. If you analyse the list of aspects of knowledge, abilities and skills required for the formation of communicative competence (see, for example [6]), you will immediately see that some abilities and skills are far from being specifically language-oriented. For example, such a fundamental competence as making a presentation, no matter whether it is a business or an academic presentation, presupposes numerous abilities and skills which are not related to language as such. Besides linguistic components, it encompasses different cultural aspects which include on the norms and rules of verbal behaviour adopted in business and professional communication.

Another argument deals with the activity-based approach to teaching languages which presupposes that the subject matter of teaching means forming, developing and perfecting abilities and skills in all the types of speech activity. It is quite logical to have a training process aimed at developing writing skills for general purposes, for business purposes, and for academic purposes. This combination of educational aims is very effective for teaching because students can compare each type of writing finding instances of similarity and difference between them, which makes their activity more consciousness-controlled.

There is still *one more argument* for developing academic writing skills within the framework of the foreign language training programme. People who deal with scientific research are supposed to know English in order to have access to the world of science in general in which most articles, books and other types of scientific papers are published in English. Knowledge of English allows them to write their own scientific works in this language, which improves the circulation and readership of their publications. Besides, scientific papers translated from one's mother tongue into English frequently lose some authenticity and fail to present the author's style of writing. That is why academic writing is always a combination of at least three things: competence in scientific writing as such,

Table 1

Academic writing competences in the course of higher educational foreign language acquisition

Year of studies	Type of academic course	Academic writing competencies
1 st stage: Training for a bachelor's degree		
1 st year	General and Business English	Writing various types of essays (descriptive, argumentative, analytical, contrast, cause and effect, critical, synthesis, review, research)
2 nd year	Business and Professional English	Writing thesis statements Writing a summary
3 rd year	English for Professional Purposes (ESP)	Writing a report Writing a conference paper
2 nd stage: Training for a master's degree		
1 st year	English for Academic Purposes (EAP)	Writing a synopsis (in Russian) Writing a scientific essay
3 rd stage: Postgraduate academic training		
1 st year	English for Academic Purposes (EAP)	Writing a synopsis (in English) Writing a research article and an abstract

fluency in English, and knowledge of Anglo-Saxon academic writing style, all the three being inseparable.

Meanwhile, there is *one argument against* academic writing being incorporated into the language course. It is a limited number of credits (measured in academic hours) given to a foreign language course in non-linguistic Universities. The best solution to the educational problem could be a compromise which consists in promoting the idea of introducing the discipline called "Academic Writing" into the University curriculum, on the one hand, and incorporating elements of training into the existing language programmes, on the other. The table below shows how elements of academic writing competencies can be incorporated into the existing programmes for teaching all the categories of students.

Competencies in different types of academic writing trained throughout the programme correspond to the general ideology of the course, the competence-and-activity based approach to teaching in particular, and the other fundamental didactic principles of education. Besides, academic writing competencies are being developed alongside with business writing competencies (not mentioned in this table) and make

up a logical combination of knowledge, abilities and skills required for each type of writing. Moreover, this succession of written activities is closely related to the sequence of other verbal activities throughout the programme. For example, planning and note-taking, which are generally trained in the first year of studies, are being developed together with the skills of making a business presentation and preparing PowerPoint slides. Thus, the principle of balanced development of verbal activities is also taken into account. The suggested sequence of writing activities seems to reflect the didactic assumption hypothetically formulated at the beginning of the article that the whole learning process is supposed to consist of activities to be regarded as cornerstones of academic writing. These are writing **an essay** and **a synopsis**.

To conclude this part of the article, it is necessary to mention that incorporating elements of academic writing into the foreign language educational programme seems to be quite a logical trend in modernising the programme, which makes it more oriented towards the requirements of the new educational standards of teaching. It can really be regarded as a compromise which could allow us to start training right

away without waiting for substantial changes in the system of education as such.

Giving the answer to *the fourth* purely didactic *question* is the most difficult task which requires profound analysis and generalization of scientific research carried out in the area of academic writing. Without going into detail we need to state that the psycholinguistic and didactic aspects have been developing so fast that today the concept of academic writing is generally accepted and has a definite status in science due to the contribution of foreign and Russian researchers. The methodology of academic writing has been worked out [1; 7], and a lot of different papers, articles and recommendations have been written [8; 9] to help the beginners in academic writing. Some of them recommend using a step-by-step approach to teaching to make it more effective and result-oriented [6; 10].

Academic writing is not only the area of theoretical analysis. A lot of practice-oriented books and manuals intended for teaching English for Special Purposes (ESP) and for Academic Purposes (EAP) have been published to develop the necessary abilities and skills of academic writing [10–15]. This is another evidence for the claims that English can be regarded as the very University discipline which can be used for developing various academic skills, writing skills in particular.

The analysis of these publications shows that the abilities and skills which are selected for training are related to a number of key verbal actions which underlie the activity of academic writing in general:

- planning, preparation and working with ideas;
- notetaking and expanding notes into simple and compound sentences;
- structuring a paragraph and writing a paragraph as a unit of a text;
- identifying cohesion in a paragraph and in a text;
- writing topic sentences (first-order information);
- adding context and supporting information (second-order information);

- writing definitions;
- writing texts of different communicative orientation (description, explanation, comparison, cause-and-effect, reasoning and argumentation);
- summarizing and writing a summary;
- analyzing and selecting sources, synthesizing sources and referring to sources;
- analyzing types of citation, analyzing and paraphrasing ideas from a source;
- avoiding plagiarism;
- incorporating evidence;
- entitling;
- writing introduction (stating aims and purpose);
- defining and solving problems, evaluating solutions;
- writing conclusion;
- evaluating, editing and repair.

These abilities and skills reflect certain verbal actions and are generally required for any type of academic writing. Besides these behavioural elements of academic writing there are linguistic aspects based on language knowledge [14; 15; 16–20]. They fall into lexical, grammatical and stylistic aspects.

Lexical aspects presuppose concentration on different types of vocabulary means, such as

- general, academic and professional vocabulary;
- use of word families and derivatives;
- use of academic nouns which are mainly responsible for expressing the subject matter of a piece of writing;
- use of different types of adjectives for evaluating, classifying, etc.;
- use of adverbials for cohesion;
- use of cohesive language structures;
- use of verbs which are responsible for the right focus;
- use of prepositions and prepositional structures (such as phrasal verbs, for example);
- use of synonyms and antonyms;
- use of identifying and discipline-specific collocations.

The most frequent grammatical forms and means which are required for academic writing include

- use of indicative, subjunctive and imperative mood;
- use of tense forms;
- use of reported speech structures;
- use of active and passive structures;
- use of verbals and verbal constructions;
- use of emphatic constructions;
- use of language structures for comparing, contrasting, assessing, responding to problems, identifying cause and effect relations, referring to data, etc.

Although nowadays academic writing tends to be less formal, stylistic specificity still exists and finds manifestation in the use of vocabulary and grammar structures discussed earlier [16–18].

To conclude the description of the educational paradigm we need to formulate the major principles of organizing and implementing the training process.

1. Following the competence-and-activity-based approach to teaching [6].
2. Relying on the competence-based model of academic writing which includes certain aspects of knowledge, abilities and skills [6; 21].
3. Moving from acquiring each skill separately to developing integrated skills.
4. Relying on the psychological mechanisms of writing, i.e. brainstorming, critical thinking, memory support, anticipating.
5. Relying on academic reading and using the text as the product of verbal activity as a pattern [6; 7; 18; 20].
6. Relying on academic literacy as one of the key competences [7].
7. Step-by-step strategy of training [6; 10].

Step-by-step strategy of training

In the final part of the article it seems reasonable to discuss the step-by-step strategy of training which can be understood and implemented in two different ways. According to the first one, each ability is to be trained separately, and once it has become an automated skill it is possible to pass over to training the next ability (for more detail see [6]). Another way to consider this principle is to look at the whole educa-

tional paradigm and the overall training process regarded as a succession of stages, each having its key competency. The essence of this principle consists in the fact that if the learning process is moving towards acquiring the competence in writing a research article, it should necessarily pass through the stages of acquiring the major abilities which underlie this competence. From our point of view, there are two stages which play a crucial role in the development of research article writing: writing an essay and writing a synopsis.

As for essay writing, a lot of attention is paid to analyzing this type of verbal activity by researchers worldwide, whereas synopsis writing tends to be disregarded and even ignored as one of the basic types of verbal activity. Strange as it may seem, the question of synopsis writing seems to be a special research area mostly for Russian linguists and educationalists. Meanwhile, a great number of skills are due to this written activity (for more detail see [21]).

If we analyse the contribution of essay writing to the development of academic writing, we will see that due to this type of activity students start thinking about planning and working with ideas, taking notes and expanding them into sentences, structuring paragraphs, compiling paragraphs into a text, identifying cohesion as a principle of text organization, structuring the text in a logical way, realizing the importance of first, second and third-order information, implementing the communicative orientation of the text, writing introduction and conclusion, editing and repairing the text. In other words, the majority of abilities needed for writing a research article, for example, are mainly acquired thanks to writing essays.

This is proved by the results of an experiment in which first-, second-, third-, and even fourth-year bachelors of the State University of Management with similar level of language competence measured with the help of a special language proficiency test were asked to write a scientific article entitled «The role of English in business communication». No recommendations had been given to help the students write

scientific articles. The results were quite easily anticipated. All the students wrote very good essays simply because essay writing was the latest verbal experience which they had had at school while getting ready for the Russian State Exam.

These results prove that students always tend to rely on the previous experience in similar types of verbal activity, especially if this experience was well prepared by means of training procedures. At the same time, they are always ready to substitute one type of verbal activity for another one which is better developed and in which they are more effective. This hypothetical assumption allowed us to conclude that in the development of any type of verbal activity there are certain basic points to be regarded as cornerstones, and the learning process is supposed to rely on them. In academic writing, the first cornerstone is essay writing which is initially formed and developed in the course of the students' school experience.

The first stage of the experiment mentioned above was conducted without any preliminary training whereas the second one was conducted after a comparatively long period of training students to write a short scientific article. This training session focused mainly on the principal mistakes made by the students at the previous stage:

- poor planning of future verbal activity or ignoring the stage of planning whatsoever;
- inability to write a good introduction containing all the necessary elements of an article;
- inability to structure the main body in a logical way;
- inability to summarise the main ideas and draw a conclusion;
- inability to formulate the topic sentence in a paragraph;
- no reference to sources;
- inability to make a reference list;
- no clear-cut understanding of the communicative task to be solved;
- lack of academic vocabulary and appropriate grammar structures;
- inability to produce a text of formal style;
- a considerable number of language mistakes in vocabulary, grammar and style.

The result of the second stage was quite encouraging and allowed us to choose the best articles written by the students, edit and even publish them [22]. Editing was a specially organized educational procedure which fell into two sessions. In the first one, students were given a list of common mistakes and were asked to find them and repair their own texts without any assistance. At this stage, the result was not very promising, and the majority of mistakes remained uncorrected. At the second stage we worked with the students individually and repaired each element of the text together focusing on the strategy of correcting mistakes and encouraging the students to implement this activity without the trainer's participation. This work turned out to be very effective and result-oriented and allowed the students to carry out practically the whole scope of correction work.

As for the second cornerstone of academic writing, it is synopsis writing which is a complex type of verbal activity based on reading and analysing the logical and linguistic peculiarities of an academic text written by another person. This text plays a very important educational role and it can be used as a pattern for creating analogous types of academic writing. The competence-based model of this activity [21] contains a number of very useful abilities and skills, such as synthesizing sources of information and making reference to them, paraphrasing ideas from a source, summarising information, condensing the text, formulating or finding topic sentences in each paragraph of the text, understanding the main idea and the details to prove it, writing an introduction and a conclusion, editing the new text.

Synopsis writing is regarded as an essential element of training within the framework of the foreign language course only at the second stage of higher education. This type of written verbal activity is quite important for training students to acquire a master's degree. At this stage they are supposed to deal with reading research articles, books and other types of scientific publications because they start their own scientific research activities which require reference to various sci-

entific data. If this verbal activity is trained properly and students acquire good skills, they can use this experience for their own scientific work, i.e. for writing articles, books and theses.

Conclusion

To summarise the description of the educational paradigm of academic writing, it is necessary to state that, first of all, it deals with precise notion of the subject matter and object of training, adopting the discipline most appropriate for this purpose and clear understanding of how to organize the learning process. Secondly, the training procedure is to be organized and implemented on the basis of certain didactic principles, competence-and-activity-based approach being the most fundamental one. Thirdly, one of the key elements of the academic writing educational paradigm is the step-by-step approach to teaching which can be regarded in two different ways: as a sequence of abilities and skills of academic writing to be acquired during the training period, and as a sequence of different verbal activities to be mastered within the higher educational course of studies. For the former, the main didactic principle is acquiring each element of knowledge, as well as each ability and skill separately to form a complete competency. For the latter, one of the key considerations is to rely on similar verbal activities which have very close competence-based patterns.

From this point of view, the way to academic writing is rather long and complicated, and clear understanding of the overall educational paradigm is very useful for implementing the training process making it quite clear both for the one who is being taught and the one who teaches.

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Статья поступила в редакцию 29.10.19

Принята к публикации 20.11.19

Образовательная парадигма академического письма

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Аннотация. В статье рассматривается понятие «образовательная парадигма академического письма», включающее в себя несколько аспектов, которые необходимо принимать во внимание при организации образовательного процесса. Цель статьи заключается в том, чтобы проанализировать эти аспекты, для того чтобы показать, каким образом академическое письмо можно инкорпорировать в существующие программы высшего образования, в частности в курс изучения иностранного языка, и разработать эффективный дидактический способ формирования навыков академического письма. Авторы формулируют основные принципы организации образовательного процесса, наиболее важными среди которых являются компетентностно-деятельностный подход к обучению, опора на разработанную авторами компетентностную модель академического письма и применение пошаговой стратегии овладения навыками. Рассмотрение академического письма как длительного процесса накопления знаний, умений и навыков, в котором достижения каждого следующего этапа всегда основаны на результатах предыдущих этапов, позволяет предположить, что на пути формирования компетентности в сфере академического письма должны быть пройдены определённые этапы. Это написание эссе, реферата и научной статьи, которые и являются вехами развития образовательной парадигмы. Соответственно, компетентность в написании научной статьи успешно формируется на основе овладения родственными видами речевой деятельности, которые имеют схожие компетентностные модели.

Это предположение подтверждается результатами эксперимента, в ходе которого студенты, не прошедшие специального обучения, не справились с написанием научной статьи, но написали эссе, т.к. этот навык присутствовал в их вербальном опыте. Проведённый анализ позволяет сделать вывод о том, что путь к освоению академического письма, который является длительным и сложным, требует глубокого понимания его образовательной парадигмы для успешного осуществления процесса обучения в рамках вузовского курса освоения иностранного языка.

Ключевые слова: академическое письмо, образовательная парадигма, компетентностно-деятельностный подход, компетентностная модель, пошаговая стратегия обучения, вехи развития образовательной парадигмы

Для цитирования: Dudnik L.V., Putilovskaya T.S. Educational Paradigm of Academic Writing // Высшее образование в России. 2020. Т. 29. № 1. С. 88-97.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31992/0869-3617-2020-29-1-88-97>

*The paper was submitted 29.10.19
Accepted for publication 20.11.19*

ВЫСШЕЕ
ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ
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Журнал издается с 1992 года.
Периодичность – 11 номеров в год.
Распространяется в регионах России,
в СНГ и за рубежом.

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Подписные индексы:
«Роспечать» – 73060, 82521
«Пресса России» – 16392, 83142

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ВЫСШЕЕ
образование
в России
10/2019
Научно-педагогический журнал

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научно-педагогический журнал