



Introduction to Academic Writing in English (a cultural perspective)

dr. Branka Milenković, Assistant Professor
Faculty of Philology and Arts, University of Kragujevac


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***“If you cannot write well,
you cannot think well;
If you cannot think well,
others will do your thinking
for you.”***

Oscar Wilde

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- ▶ Communicating through writing is dependent on:
 - ▶ 1) General characteristics in Academic Writing
 - ▶ 2) Cultural/Scientific field characteristics in Academic Writing

General Approach to Academic Writing

- ▶ Writing is a communicative act = READER-BASED WRITING

General characteristics of Academic Writing take into consideration:

What is the PURPOSE of writing?

WHO do we write FOR?

- **Purposes** may be various: to define, to argue, to inform, to entertain, to explain etc.
- **Target audience** may be various: a friend, a teacher, an employer, general public etc.

Dominant Purposes and Target audience

Purpose	to Self	to Others
To learn	Copying, note taking	
To convey emotions	Stream of consciousness, keeping a diary	Letter, personal essay
To inform		Essay writing, book review
To convince/persuade		Essay writing, critique
To entertain		Parody, rhymes
To keep in touch		Postcard, letter

- ▶ Academic Writing relates not only to expert writers but also those individuals writing for the *academic discourse community*. (Tanskanen 2006, Tribble 1996, Langan 1993, Biber 1988)
- ▶ Academic discourse community —————> experts (professors, researchers) and novice writers (students)
- ▶ *Academic discourse community* uses a specific writing format, writing style, specific sentence structures, specific vocabulary...
- ▶ Therefore, Academic Writing formats may be: scientific papers, textbooks, doctoral/master thesis, seminar papers, student essays etc.

Cultural and scientific field diversity of Academic Writing

▶ Cultural diversity:

(first introduced by Robert Kaplan in *Contrastive Rhetoric*, 1966)

- ▶ ARABIC PROSE – paralel idea organization
- ▶ SPANISH PROSE – long introductory paragraphs, long digressions
- ▶ CHINESE PROSE – numerous examples, often leaving out the main idea of the text

Academic writing expectations

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graph TD; A[Academic writing expectations] --> B[IN ASIA]; A --> C[IN USA];
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- To precisely present facts

IN ASIA

- to present the skills of writing

IN USA

▶ **Scientific field diversity (Swales & Feak 1994):**

▶ **SIMPLE vs. COMPLEX**

SCIENTIFIC FIELD	'SIMPLE'	'COMPLEX'
SCIENCE AND MEDICINE	Well-planned, clearly designed = POSITIVE	Confusing, messy, incoherent = NEGATIVE
SOCIAL SCIENCE	Unsophisticated, poorly composed = NEGATIVE	Sophisticated, profound, elaborate = POSITIVE

Rhetorical patterns for Academic Writing in English

- ▶ Hierarchical organization of ideas (coherence)
- ▶ Focus on the main idea in the text (coherence)
- ▶ Transparent and explicit idea connection in the text (cohesion)

- ▶ **ACADEMIC WRITING IN ENGLISH = READER-BASED WRITING**
 - ▶ *The writer is **RESPONSIBLE** for the interpretation of the text!!!*
 - ▶ *The reader does not understand the text = the writer is not coherent, not competent!*

- ▶ (Weigle 2002)

- ▶ Academic Writing in English



- ▶ **COMMUNICATIVE WRITING**



- ▶ The writer **guides** the reader through the text



- ▶ Communicative devices (coherence & cohesion)