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Essay as a Form of Academic Writing

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REFERRING TO TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS (EDITORIAL)

Transactional Analysis as a school of psychotherapy can be used in other areas of life, among all, in the analysis of a given organisation or an educational system. Using Transactional Analysis very often means taking advantage of its specific language. Translating the description of a given situation into the language of Transactional Analysis means explaining it at the same time. Such an explanation makes it frequently possible to grasp the essence of an issue and find a solution if needed. In case of this article, the language of Transactional Analysis helps to understand why for many years an essay has been a popular form of work in the educational system.

The word "essay" comes from French and means "to try". A student writing an essay tries to describe a given topic in such a way that is expected by their reader. A well-written essay has a defined structure and conveys expected content. During the process of learning, there are many situations in which regardless of one's efforts a given essay is not positively assessed. A similar situation takes place in the communication process described by Transactional Analysis. Appropriate communication requires that the transaction from a particular ego state should reach a given recipient. An answer is to come back to the ego state that was the speaker. Then, communication is effective. An essay is a form of organising thoughts with the help of words. While writing an essay, a given student has to organise their thoughts properly and meet their teacher's expectations. It is a way of learning appropriate communication. It resembles a situation in which we learn to adjust our language to the language of our interlocutor. In case of an essay, this adjustment is also an educational process.

Transactional Analysis assumes that a well-developed person is able to integrate particular ego states with the help of the Adult ego state. This state makes use of the other ones in solving practical

problems. If needed, it refers to the norms, using the Parent ego state. In other situations it resorts to emotions, i.e. the Child ego state. An essay has a defined structure and form that a student has to take into account while writing. Within this imposed structure, the form is usually of a problematic nature. The student should defend a given thesis, solve a logical problem or draw appropriate conclusions. It is important to present one's point of view in an essay, which is often linked with describing one's emotions. This is an analogy to personality development in the theory of Transactional Analysis. All three personality aspects should cooperate to reach the desired effect. Using an essay as a way of learning and evaluating its effect constitutes at the same time the process of self-development. That is why an essay still remains the most popular educational tool in academic and developmental tutoring. The educational and developmental process is often described by means of stages: lack of understanding, making an effort, drawing conclusions, acquiring skills and finally understanding and appropriate action. An appropriate course of this process requires a creative approach (the Child ego state), taking the binding rules into consideration (the Parent ego state) and rational activity aimed at a given effect (the Adult ego state). The better these three aspects cooperate, the more developed one's personality is.

Zbigniew Wieczorek

Summary

Academic writing has always been of primary importance for post-graduate students. Writing is the basis of study, so developing the skills of writing in English opens higher opportunities for them. The paper considers different types of an academic essay, outlines requirements which are necessary for effective writing, analyses structure and functions of its constituent elements and examines compositional structure of paragraphs.

The structure of an academic essay consists of introduction that includes thesis statement defining the content of the main part; body that presents argumentation of the problem. This part also includes compilation of other points of view and presentation of the own theory. Conclusion is the final part that summarizes the topics in the paragraphs and gives final commentary or recommendations of the writer. Compositional structure of a paragraph normally starts with the topic sentence identifying its main idea. It is followed with supporting sentences developing the main idea and giving details, facts or examples, and the last sentence (concluding) which refers to the topic at the beginning of the paragraph or links the information with that coming up in the next paragraph. Such paragraph composition allows conveying information in the most effective way. Linking words and phrases (logical connectors) are normally used in the texts of academic essay and are classified on their functional purpose in the text. They realize coherent links between sentences and paragraphs and help students to convey their understanding best. Academic writing, namely essays, teaches students to analyze and choose useful information for further research, to look at the ideas from a different prospective and to convey concepts and obtained results best to their target readers. An essay can be considered an effective form of different language skills control.

Keywords: academic essay, compositional structure, paragraph, introduction, body, conclusion.

Introduction

Political, economic and cultural ties, growing exchange of information cause emergence of common information society and actualize the problem of foreign language study by students and graduate students of non-linguistic specialties.

Written scientific communication gives opportunity to participate in international and national conferences, to enter the world of science and research, to publish research papers in various journals.

The topicality of the article is determined by the importance of academic writing, particularly academic essays for contemporary students and post-graduate students, as it is widely used in the field of research and education. Academic writing teaches students to analyze and to choose useful information for further research. Improving the skill of writing in English can open higher opportunities in future for students from different countries.

The **purpose** of the study is to help students to acquire skills of writing effective academic essays. The **tasks** are to consider different types of essays; to analyze linguistic units peculiar to them and to examine compositional and content structure of paragraphs.

To solve the tasks, the following research **methods** were used:

- theoretical (analysis, synthesis, generalization), which allowed to study theoretical principles of studying;
- empirical (conversations, observation, pedagogical experiment), which ensured the study of the process of communicative competence formation and verification of its effectiveness;
- experimental (approbation of the proposed methodology);
- observational (observation of the educational process, systematization and generalization of pedagogical experience).

Theoretical Basis and Discussion

The concept “academic writing” is very close to the meaning of the English term “scientific writing”. Foreign researchers describe “academic writing” as four “P”: personal product, process, practice (Swales, 2004). Scientific text is considered as a product, writing practice as an individual experience, and writing itself as a working process of “pen on paper” or keys on the keyboard.

As a creative productive speech activity academic writing improves effectiveness of students’ training. It develops creative thinking skills and productive writing, based on motor, visual, speech and auditory analyzers. Academic writing develops procedural motivation and plays more important role than other types of writing in the development of speech activity (Tarnopolskyi, 2008, p. 15–16).

The first who started the essay genre in literature was Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592). He wrote an essay which he characterized as an attempt to organize his thoughts in writing. The word “essay” derives from the French “essayer”, meaning “to try”, “to attempt”. English word has the similar meaning: “trial” or “try” (Gromiak, 2006). Literary essay is considered as “a small prose which has free composition, expresses personal opinions and impressions on a particular

subject or question and does not claim to comprehensive and decisive interpretation of topic” (Kovalenko, 2012, p. 249), while academic essay, in general, verifies the students’ ability to arrange in a logical sequence their thoughts and is aimed to test thinking skills. In academic essay the authors should demonstrate a well-developed critical thinking and reveal their understanding of the problem in details. To write a successful essay, it is very important to focus on the problem and to present the thoughts with properly arranged argumentation and examples.

There are a lot of different types of academic essay. The particular style and characteristics of the essay are very important. Mastering them will help students to structure and to present arguments effectively. The most popular types of essays are the following: essay of cause and effect, classification and division, compare and contrast, exemplification, history thesis, dialectical essay, critical, narrative, descriptive, etc.

Cause and effect essays show how the author understands the relationship of cause and effect between objects and phenomena. In other words, a student must describe a situation, suggest what caused it and write about the effects it had. Though there are different types of an academic essay, its general structure and principles tend to be almost the same. The structure of an essay usually consists of introduction, body paragraph and conclusion. A cause and effect essay may have three logical structures. The first one is: several reasons cause one consequence. It indicates the result of certain problem and some (mostly three) reasons that lead to it. The second version presents one cause and several consequences. It describes a reason that could lead to several consequences. The third one contains a cause and effect chain (domino effect). The introduction presents the first and the last part of the causal chain.

Classification and division essays evaluate students’ skills of “objects (processes, events) division into classes (groups etc.) according to certain characteristics”. All sciences are based on classifications. To understand the whole means to interpret its parts. The author of such essay must demonstrate the ability to divide the whole unit into its components that contributes to new and deeper knowledge of a subject or phenomenon.

Writing an essay of compare and contrast, a student must compare two objects or phenomena and find out their common or distinctive features. In the introduction the author is required to specify the criteria of the comparison. This type of the essay supposes the necessity to follow one of two versions of thought presentation. The first variant includes thesis statement, analysis of the first object or phenomenon features, analysis of the second object or phenomenon characteristics, conclusion. The second variant contains thesis statement, parallel coverage of similar or distinctive features of both analyzed (events), conclusion.

Dialectical essays help to develop critical thinking. In this case most situations are complex, ambiguous, and, moreover, the same events can be viewed from different positions. Dialectical approach to assessing different events

demonstrates respect to different views. Dialectical thinking is the most effective when you need to solve controversial issues and to appraise different, often contradictory positions. This type of essays is important for lighting different approaches especially while solving scientific or technical problems.

In illustrative essays (Exemplification) an author must give convincing examples to prove the opinion, directly related to the subject of the analysis. Number of instances is not important. It can be just one example, but it should be bright, persuasive. It should convey the essence of the described phenomenon and shouldn't be accidental.

Critical essays provide the analysis and critical views usually on scientific theory, results or methodological approaches to the research. An author must describe strong and weak points of the subject. Critical essays should not express subjective views of the author, but present objective evidence. The topic ought to be quiet narrow and specific. Focusing on the detailed aspect of the analysis will help to find proper arguments and examples. Conclusion must have the idea confirming the author's point of view.

Features and structure of the narrative and descriptive essays are similar to known stories and descriptions (Gromiak, 2006).

The structure of an academic essay consists of the following components 1) Title highlights the main problem of the essay; 2) Introduction contains the problem defining exactly the content of the main part; 3) Body is argumentation of the problem based on the collected material: this part includes compilation of other points of view and presentation of the own theory, its justification, illustrations of compelling empirical data, balanced and effective evidence, use of logic connections between paragraphs for solving problems; 4) Conclusion is a short summary of main arguments (Kovalenko, 2012, p. 243).

Although there are different types of academic essays, the overall structure and principles tend to be the same. The first paragraph presents general overview of what the piece of writing is going to be about and provides important background information (Sowton, 2014, p. 28). Introduction usually begins with general statements. The author introduces the topic to the reader. Its main aim is to attract readers' attention and interest, so the essay should be created for particular audience.

The most important element is the thesis statement, which contains the idea of the whole essay and shows the attitude of the author to the topic or issue. Therefore, when writing introduction you must thoroughly analyze the issues you're going to highlight, or perhaps it contains information that won't be particularly discussed in the paper (Tarnopolskyi, 2006, p. 29).

To write correct introduction the authors should use their own words, avoid repetition of the words in the essay title; it should contain general information (without giving personal information unless the essay requires this); it should refer to all questions of the essay; be focused only on the essay problem (without

any unnecessary information) (Sowton, 2014, p. 46). For example: *People all over the world become closer than ever before. Goods and services that appear in a country will be immediately promoted in the others. International transfer and communication are more common. For describing this present time, they use the term: THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION. This phenomenon affects the economic business and exerts a wide influence on society at that. The growth of the developing countries is the main cause of globalization and it brings both opportunities and disadvantages to them (1).*

Key vocabulary at every structural level is determined by the function of each structural part. The introduction may contain general background information, context or reasons which explain why the subject under consideration is important, eg.: *Globalization has been marked by the emergence of a world system created to protect the interests of capital, but it was still shocking to understand that the most important consideration for politicians was to prop up the financial system. Their defense is that, without doing so, the worst economic disaster since the 1930s would have become the worst ever... (2); outline the main points of the essay: *First ... Next ... Finally ...* ; the purpose of the essay – *this essay will analyze / outline / examine / discuss*; – *This essay will examine both positive and negative contributions of globalization to economic, social, political, and biotic environment in the world (3).* In the introduction such lexical structures as: *it is said that, the fact is, in one word, that's why, etc.* – are normally to be used.*

The main part should have an appropriate number of body paragraphs with topic sentences which relate to the topics in the introduction (sometimes it can be one paragraph). This is the largest part of the essay, as it describes and substantiates the idea of the thesis statement. Each paragraph should include the following sentences: the main sentence (topic sentence), supporting sentences, which may provide specific examples, and the final sentence (concluding sentence) (Tarnopolskyi, 2006, p. 29–30).

The topic sentence identifies the main idea of the paragraph. It tends to be rather general than a specific idea, it doesn't include examples. The main idea of the topic sentence controls the rest of the paragraph. Usually it is the first sentence in the paragraph, but not necessarily. The supporting sentences develop the main idea expressed in the topic sentence and provide details, facts or examples. When the topic sentence comes first, the supporting sentences answer the questions the readers develop in their minds after reading the topic sentence. In this case, the last sentence (concluding sentence) can either return the reader to the topic at the beginning of the paragraph or act as a connection to link the information with that coming up in the next paragraph (Scott, 2012). For example: *Globalization helps global market to consider whole world as a single market (topic sentence). Traders are extending their areas of business by focusing world as a global village. Earlier to the 1990s, there was restriction of importing certain products which were already manufactured in India like agricultural products, engineering*

goods, food items, toiletries, etc. However, during 1990s there was a pressure from rich countries over World Trade Organization, World Bank (engaged in development financing activities), and International Monetary Fund to allow other countries to spread their businesses by opening trade and market in the poor and developing countries (supporting sentences). In India the globalization and liberalization process was started in 1991 under the Union Finance Minister(4) (concluding sentence). Americanised is to make american in character or nationality (topic sentence). Newspapers have been americanised to the extent that in Australia newspapers publish news from the U.S. This is because a lot of Australian idols fashions and commonly watched movie stars come from America and it is important for newspapers to report on these trends (supporting sentences). Since our world is already so globalised it is easy for journalists to gather information about American trends and stars to share with the eager Australian public (5) (concluding sentence).

The body of the essay is characterized by using of the following lexical units: *to start / begin with, afterwards, last and the most significant (reason), firstly, secondly, thirdly, the next what is noteworthy, not only ... but, one more point is*, etc. For example: *Globalization has affected cultures in two ways: Firstly, it has tried to homogenize the cultures. We can see this in dress pattern such as pent and shirt and to some extent in food recipes—pizza, Chinese noodles, etc. On the other hand, globalization has helped in the resurgence of local culture. This we can observe in the revival of traditional cultures and reforming of the identity (6).*

The conclusion is the final part of the essay, which summarizes the topics in the paragraphs and gives final commentary or recommendations of the writer. Accordingly, conclusion typically includes lexical structures such as: *in conclusion, in summary, to sum it up, as a result of this report*, etc. For example: *As a result, the world is slowly and slowly becoming as one place. Both the media and geographical mobility feed this perception (6); Thus, increased economic linkages led to cultural influences across countries. The key agents of globalization of culture are transnational corporations, cultural and media agencies that go beyond the nation-state (6); Globalization has been a very popular issue in the world. The arguments between the drawbacks and positive effects in cultural identity and ethnic diversity have been the major discussion. In my view, I agree with the notion that local traditions are being devalued by this modernization (7) – (final commentary).*

Experiment and Results

Our students had the task to write an essay of cause and effect. They were supposed to identify the causes of certain phenomena in Ukraine (*globalization*) and their consequences (*Food habits in Ukraine appear to have changed*), and

establish relations between them. The plan of the essay included an introduction (*Globalization has significantly influenced food products and eating habits in different countries of the world*). The main part of the essay contained an analysis of the consequences resulting from the impact of the worldwide globalization on national cuisine of Ukraine and possible outcome, to which this process can eventually lead. In the thesis statement it is told that one reason (*globalization*) caused several consequences (*eating habits have changed; frozen or takeaway meals are becoming more and more popular; people do not have to spend too much time preparing their meals*); another important change is the increasing popularity of foreign restaurants and cuisines in our country. The students came to the conclusion, that globalization had significant influence on the Ukrainians eating habits, it may also cause damage to Ukrainian traditions.

Before writing essays the teacher offered to watch video on the topic close to the theme of the essay (*A world of Food in a City*) and read texts devoted to the main theme of the future essay (*Turkish Treats; What Impact Has Had Globalization on Food and Eating Habits in Italy?*), this is followed by challenging questions to the texts (reading between the lines), exercises aimed at detailed understanding of the text content (True-False) and discussion of problem issues. After that there were a lot of lexical exercises enriching topic vocabulary (globalization vocabulary, academic words) and exercises with grammar constructions necessary to write this essay (noun phrases; time phrases). Exercises explaining complexity of the essay idea and writing its proper introduction were also given. After writing the essay it is very important to review the work in terms of content and structure. Two lists of check questions were proposed (Task Checklist, Language Checklist). According to Task Checklist students are expected to check whether they used correct structure of their essay and whether essay paragraphs focus on the appropriate information; whether the introduction matches all parts of the essay and mentions its ideas; whether the essay includes examples which confirm arguments in the main part and a relevant conclusion; whether their essay has 250–300 words. Students must make necessary changes to the essay, then it is suggested to check the work for language errors which are common to B2 learners. (Tarnopolskyi, 2006, p. 30).

Lexical features of English writing are characterized by the use of linking words. They can be classified according to their functional purpose in the text. Articles from newspaper *The Guardian* were used as empirical material in the process of teaching essay writing. The examples below are taken from the students' works, and students' essays included such groups of linking words:

- 1) Listing linkers – linking words used for counting and organizing logical sequence: *firstly, secondly, finally, in addition, moreover: In addition, Ukrainian people's opportunity to experiment with foreign products was rather limited.*
- 2) Reinforcement linkers – linking words for strengthening of thought, namely: *furthermore, moreover, what is more, besides. – Furthermore, pasta is now increasingly popular in our country.*

- 3) Similarity linkers – linking words expressing similarity. In the essay we may find the following words: *similarly, in the same way, correspondingly, likewise, as well as*. – *Long-distance learning as well as face-to-face learning is the effective way of teaching.*
- 4) Example linkers – linking words explaining the idea by giving examples and providing additional information: *for example, for instance*. – *Italian food has some excellent dishes, for example, pizza, pasta, different pasta sources.*
- 5) Summary linkers – linking words giving a result or consequence, or summarizing presented information: *in conclusion, to conclude, thus, in brief, in a word, to summarise, in conclusion*. – *Thus, globalization has a significant influence on the way Ukrainian people eat.*
- 6) Expressing-an-alternative linkers – linking words used to express alternative opinions, to make a contrast: *alternatively, rather, on the other hand, in contrast, on the contrary*. – *On the other hand, globalization can cause damage to national food traditions.*
- 7) Result / consequence linkers – linking words expressing causation and consequence: *so, therefore, as a result / consequence, accordingly, consequently*. – *Frozen or takeaway meals have become very popular nowadays. As a result, people do not have to spend so long time preparing and making food.*
- 8) Stating-the-obvious linkers – linking words that are used to express certain evidence (obviousness) in the text. For example: *obviously, clearly, naturally*. – *The modernization of globalization can directly affect the cultural life of a country. Clearly, local traditions are being devalued by this modernization.*
- 9) Emphasis linkers – linking word, used for emphasizing certain opinions, giving real/true/surprising information. For example: *as a matter of fact, especially, in fact, at least*. – *In fact, ready-made pasta sources are so popular, that sales have doubled in the last years.*

The process of essay writing has several stages: 1) brainstorming: at this stage it is important to develop “vein” of thought and work out a sufficient number of ideas; 2) choice: only those ideas that directly relate to the theme of essays are selected from the previous notes; 3) plan of the future essay: the ideas which can be used in introduction, main body and conclusion are taken from preliminary list. The main part (body) consists of several paragraphs, in which the first or second sentence contains the idea, and the other sentences comprise evidence or arguments; 4) draft: writing an essay according to plan, using lexical and syntactic means typical to academic style of writing; 5) proofreading and a final variant: a written essay is read very carefully, errors are corrected, logical presentation of thoughts are checked. Thus, the key to writing a proper essay is a clear understanding of the requirements, following essay structure and performance of all stages of writing, clear time management (Grenville, 2001).

Conclusion

Teaching students/graduate students to write an academic essay requires thorough preparatory work. Different types of essay, classified on form and style, require an individual to develop different skills: understanding and suggesting causes and effects of a particular situation; setting out both advantages and disadvantages of certain event or phenomenon before expressing an opinion; outlining a problem and choosing one particular and the most appropriate solution; giving sensible arguments to persuade target readers. Students writing an academic essay have to learn to analyze a number of different viewpoints and make statements based on their understanding. There are certain rules that are necessary to be followed for an academic essay to be effective. The structure of an essay should consist of three parts, each of them should perform its function: the introduction to an essay should lead the reader into the main body of the essay and give background information. It must also include the thesis statement and state the structure of the essay. In an essay body students need to present their arguments in favor of the thesis statement; in an essay conclusion – to bring together all the points from the main body, state personal opinion on the problem and make a final comment. They should also take into consideration composition structure of a paragraph. Usually the first sentence in a paragraph is a topic sentence which introduces the topic. It is followed with supporting sentences which give extra information about the topic. The paragraph is ended with a concluding sentence which sums up the paragraph. Distinguishing features of academic essay texts are linking words or logical connectors that show logical links between sentences and paragraphs, thoughts as a fact. Thus, training of academic writing improves not only skills of language structure usage and speech activity but develops mental abilities of logic thinking.

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Illustrative Material

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Esej jako forma pisania akademickiego

Streszczenie

Pisanie akademickie zawsze miało pierwszorzędne znaczenie dla studentów. Pisanie jest podstawą nauki, więc rozwijanie umiejętności pisania w języku angielskim otwiera przed nimi większe możliwości. Artykuł analizuje różne rodzaje eseju akademickiego, określa wymagania niezbędne do skutecznego pisania, analizuje strukturę i funkcje jego elementów składowych oraz bada strukturę kompozycyjną akapitów.

Słowa kluczowe: esej akademicki, struktura kompozycyjna, akapit, wprowadzenie, treść, wnioski.