

Introduction to
Academic
Essay Writing:
From Theory to Practice

Dr. Burak TOMAK

5th Edition





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**INTRODUCTION TO ACADEMIC ESSAY WRITING:
FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE**

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*To My Dearest Parents Selma and Murat Tomak,
My Sister Burcu Tomak and My Auntie Sevinç Golođlu*

PREFACE

This book has been written to raise the awareness of people about the importance of academic essay writing because as writing is one of the productive skills in language acquisition process, people have some difficulty in making their own sentences in the foreign language that they have just learned. Therefore, most of the learners want neither to speak nor to write in that language. They would like to read and listen because receptive skills are considered much easier and learners feel more comfortable when they try to comprehend them. This book will encourage the learners of English to make more correct and accurate sentences with the sentence structures given within the essay types that they need to know in order to be able to write academic essays.

Writing deserves more attention specifically in an academic context because it requires a formal way of expression. Thus, a language user who is proficient in a language may not necessarily write properly and accurately in accordance with academic writing style of the language s/he has learned. In fact, every language has its own writing style. For instance, the writers in English are expected to be more direct compared to Turkish language, in which writers are expected to be more indirect to be accepted as more formal. This means that knowing a language does not mean that one can write properly in that language, as well. Therefore, learners of a language must be taught about how to write in that language while they are trying to improve their language skills.

Writing consists of different parts and types such as academic essays, academic articles and academic dissertations. Therefore, the focus of this book is on the academic essays which will be beneficial for the “B1 level” of English language learners in universities who will take a proficiency test in a School of Foreign Languages that will certify their linguistic competence to start to take their departmental courses, which will be provided them in English language especially for the departments or faculties which give English-medium-instruction. What is more, these students in the departments have to know how to write academic essays as for the term papers that they will write or the reports that they are expected to submit as one of the course requirements. Therefore, this book will give some insight into the formation of these academic papers that are the necessities of an academic study in English.

There are also students who would like to pursue their academic life abroad and they are supposed to take an exam that is accepted all around the world just like IELTS or TOEFL to apply to their dream universities. In IELTS test, just like any other language proficiency tests applied all around the world, writing skill is also tested. There are two parts for the test-takers to complete for the writing part: Task 1 and Task 2. In the latter, test-takers are to write an academic essay considering the writing task, given to them. Thus, this book will also provide the students who are planning to take an IELTS test with the opportunity to improve their wri-

ting skills in terms of Task 2 in IELTS. The sample essays, shown throughout the book, have all been designed regarding these learners of English who are planning to certify their language proficiency with an IELTS score.

This book does not target at the learners of English only. The instructors, who are giving “Academic Writing” course in a higher education level, will also be informed about how to teach and present the different essay types that they need to teach to their learners with samples along with the theoretical background. The instructors of English will find this book fruitful for their professional development because they will learn the different perspectives to teach academic essay writing and realize the importance of it.

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CHAPTER 1

WHAT IS WRITING?

Writing is one of the skills required for a person to be called as “literate”. This makes the learning of it more difficult compared to other skills because a child who has not got any education is able to speak and listen to what is spoken around him/her to understand what is going on but s/he needs a special education to be able to read and write at the same time. Thus, according to Hyland (2002), people could be literate only when they have “a set of discrete, value-free technical skills which included decoding and encoding meanings, manipulating writing tools, perceiving shape-sound correspondences, etc., which are acquired through formal education” (p. 53). This is valid for the people who are acquiring their first language because we are not born with writing and reading skills and we will never improve them unless we get some education. However, this is also the same for the people who are learning either their second or foreign language because writing is a skill that needs to be developed even if you are able to write in the foreign language you are trying to learn.

In order to better understand the issue of writing, the definition made by the dictionary of Merriam-Webster (2020) should be taken a closer look:

1: *the act or process of one who writes: such as*

a: *the act or art of forming visible letters or characters specifically : HANDWRITING sense 1*

b: *the act or practice of literary or musical composition*

2: *something written: such as*

a: *letters or characters that serve as visible signs of ideas, words, or symbols*

b: *a letter, note, or notice used to communicate or record*

c: *a written composition*

d: *INSCRIPTION*

3: *a style or form of composition*

It can be understood that writing is perceived from three different perspectives in the definitions given in this well-known dictionary which is respected and accepted worldwide. Firstly, it is thought to be an action or activity for a person to express what s/he wants to say or convey to the reader. The second one can be regarded as a piece of written text that consists of letters and words and that has a meaning within itself. The last one is the genre of the writing text with regards to the content.

The last one is one of the main focuses of this book because there are different writing types. Although there are several different writing types according to the content, the mostly known ones are literary and scientific texts. The literary ones include novel, story, poem, and fables whereas the scientific ones account for articles and essays. Though the former is more academic than the latter, essays also require some kind of academic knowledge to be written by an author. Thus, this book will focus on the different essay types and how they should be created considering the steps to follow disregarding the other procedures to follow in order to write an academic article.

1.1. Why do people need to write?

We all know that the beginning of history dates back to the times when the first writing system was created because people were able to find out what their ancestors did and how they were able to build their own civilizations. Without the writing systems, it is impossible for us to learn from our past and the experiences of our predecessors. As they were able to write, we started to figure out what they did and what they did not. Thus, we were able to benefit from their experiences, which was a real requirement for us to develop the facilities that we already had. Therefore, it is easy to come to the conclusion that one can reach more people than the times when s/he speaks just by writing something s/he wants to share. Thus, the audience or the target can expand as the time goes by when one writes because writing is something permanent and long-lasting as long as the target can both reach and decode what has been written. However, the audience is quite restricted to the people who listen to you when one speaks unless the speech is recorded. What is more, people can hear you once and once they have missed a single important point that you have touched upon during your speech, that information will be missing whereas what you want to convey with your writing can be analyzed and read several times until it is fully comprehended for the readers. This actually makes writing a little bit challenging than other skills such as speaking because while you are speaking, you may make some mistakes and your

audience will be more than welcome towards your faults because you must speak spontaneously without having so much thinking time over what you are going to say. What is more, you have the chance to correct your mistakes at the time of your speaking because you have the opportunity to clarify yourself and correct the misunderstandings as you have a face-to-face interaction with your audience who can easily ask you the points that might be found unclear for them. As a speaker, you are there to help them to make everything comprehensible. In contrast, while you are writing, you have to pay a great attention to what you are going to write and you have the opportunity to think twice, three times or ten times before you start to write, which means that they do not have the right to make mistakes because mistakes in writing have their own costs. As the readers of a writing do not have the chance to meet and ask the author about something that might be found confusing in the book or article, the writer must be careful about what s/he is going to write. Thus, s/he must be as clear as possible for the reader to better understand what is written. In other words, the writings have to be reader-friendly, which will make them easy to comprehend for the readers interested in them. These are all the reasons that makes writing more significant than other skills as well as why writers must give great importance to their writings.

One of the most important reasons why we write is to transfer the knowledge that we already have either to the people who are interested in them or to the following generations who will be able to obtain the chance to learn what has happened beforehand. Another reason why we write is for social reasons especially because of the responsibilities given to us by the society we live in. This means that unless you are able to write properly, you will be “excluded from a wide range of social rules, which majority of people in industrialized societies associate with power and prestige” (Tribble, 1996, p. 12). In order to live in this modern society, we need to make money to survive and without the skill of writing, it is almost impossible for a person not to know how to write. In fact, it is not enough to know how to write but it is crucial to be able to write properly and accurately in accordance with the situation, condition and the requirements that we have. For instance, one needs to know how to write appropriate e-mails, letters or journals and they all depend on the type of job one is doing.

As for a person who is in charge of the international trade department of a firm, s/he is supposed to write e-mails or letters to the firms with which they are having a commercial transaction. Therefore, s/he needs to know how to better write an e-mail or a letter that will express both what they need and what they want. Therefore, people doing such kind of business need this type of writing skills that will facilitate their business transactions. They will surely learn this kind of knowledge