

Developing a Teaching and Teacher-training Rationale for Academic Writing in English

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Abstract

Despite its increasing importance, mastery of academic English remains a substantial challenge among numerous learners of Arab heritage, one that is complex and multifactorial. The aim of this study is to explore underlying causes behind the underperformance of Arab learners' writing output, and suggest possible strategies and solutions for teachers and teacher-trainers of academic English. Focus on surface-level writing errors at the expense of written discourse and genre analysis may be one of the key causes. Additionally, insufficient training of teachers may be a substantial underlying factor, with emphasis being given to product- and process-writing, but perhaps less so at the text level. Therefore writing features that need to be addressed in a writing course for trainers, teachers, translators or learners should also include aspects relating to (i) reader-writer responsibility as expectations vary across different cultures; (ii) the learners' developmental stage as this influences the written output; (iii) rhetoric and text features and how they relate to specific genres, and (iv) aspects of positive and negative transfer from the learners own discourse community. Teacher-training and teaching courses adopting these underpinning principles have already met with success among English writing learners and practitioners of Arab-heritage.

Keywords: contrastive rhetoric, genre-analysis, intercultural rhetoric, reader-writer responsibility, teacher-training.

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