# Interview 6

Speaker 1

Can you describe how you learned English academic writing? How did your teachers teach academic writing?

Speaker 2

My experience with learning methodically learning how to write methodically was actually a very negative. And I really believe that I learned writing through reading, I think this is the first step, the most effective and practical step is reading and seeing how others write, and that has taught me I think. I really think that this is what played a part in teaching me how to write, seeing what others have wrote, and imitating that in a sense, does it have? What effect does it have? What structures do they follow? I think this is what really so practise is actually more effective in my opinion than

Speaker 1

How did your teachers teach academic writing?

Speaker 2

What I really remember that was a while ago was the same in each course. So we took actually in the College of Education, we took writing for two years writing courses so that would make it 4 courses. We started with a very interesting book actually, I forgot the name of the book. Just the usual Write a paragraph, start with the topic sentence and of course support that sentence with relevant ideas. And then we progressed into writing an essay and thesis statement and of course they have paragraphs following that introduction and conclusion. Did it really make an effect because we were taught in a theoretical way and not a practical way? I we didn't apply in a way that was, I think, that really should. To this day writing an introduction is an effort, Can you imagine that I have my PhD and still writing an introduction I cannot recall something that I studied that really think that I think that it really has affected me or that I can say that I really know how to write a really good introduction, I can't say that. Because it's subjective, writing an introduction it's it depends on your audience. And then of course, we progressed into the kinds of essays, argumentative, descriptive kinds of essays. That's how we were taught. And some of that information I remember not do use some of it. I don't think I can even recall, yeah.

Speaker 1

How did you improve your academic writing?

Speaker 2

I could say through reading and completing my studies abroad I finished my master's and my PhD in UK, so lots of writing and academic writing this helped me to improve my academic writing.

Speaker 1

Is academic writing important for students?

Speaker 2

Yes, simply because it is a chance for them to write. Yes. So for instance, there are programmes, programmes that they don't write as much as they should. For example my students In the translation programme or the linguistics programme, the translations they do a lot of translation. So it's basically translating something from one language into another. Do they have like their own opinion? Do they have their own opinion, their own perspective? To a certain extent, I don't think they do, so they're basically it's copying or taking something from one culture to another. The linguistics is more, I believe is a more of a scientific field, so of course they do a lot of writing. but something that was missing. You reminded me of something, when I took my PhD in Lancaster, and one of the things that they kept pointing out at the at the first year over and over again, yes, you do write and you do write a lot and it's to the point in direct and not clear yet. It does not have a voice. Yeah, and that's an integral point that I think is missing from writing here. Is it cultural? Maybe because I've given it a good amount of thought. Maybe it's cultural, maybe. As Arabs voice is not valued as much as it's valued in Western societies. That's why we overlook that point.

Speaker 1

Is academic writing important for their academic learning prospects? How does academic writing impact students’ higher education?

Speaker 2

Of course, how they will get high marks without good academic writing and also how they are able to complete their further studies all these things required good academic writing.

Speaker 1

Do you think students are able to express their opinion in their academic writing? why or how?

Speaker 2

I think they're more concerned with their mark, what my teacher wants to say, is what I write is structurally correct, am I covering all points that are required in this essay or this assignment. Students are more concerned with that than expressing their opinion or present their voice

Speaker 1

How do you think students express their opinion in their academic writing?

Speaker 2

So, I have taught, of course, I've taught professional writing and I actually have a book about writing academic essay. But having taught creative writing I've thought, how do I make my students really? present their voice, create something that comes from within and not just imitate. And one of the techniques I adopted and I actually implemented that into this, the core specification is that this cannot be done when there is the fear and the intimidation of the mark, So what I did was after each lecture, so a lectures about poetry, a lecture about, I ask my students to write piece of writing. The fact that you submit something that applies the form correctly, you take 2 marks automatically. But just give me something that you wrote. Of course they write it in the class after lecture. So I watched them writing and without the fear of is my language correct?. So I think this is a very important point. The intimidation of the mark is, is extremely it's it influences how a student really expresses herself. There's a fear of just losing marks in a mind doing this correctly. So if she's not afraid of losing marks. That gives her the space in order to express.

Speaker 1

Are there any barriers to teaching academic writing? What are they?

Speaker 2

One of the major barrier that we faced that years ago, was that the students excepted into English department without an English test. And it was very unfair to the student, because she doesn't have the language, she doesn't have the tool in order to write, and that was a barrier. So we had to teach her language before she could write. She doesn't have the components of writing that was a barrier. That's a major point that universities and registration administration should look out for. Is she professional in the language? And I don't mean profession, but advanced ones.

Speaker 1

How you define arguments in academic writing? How would you describe the importance of the arguments in academic writing?

Speaker 2

The arguments is academic style of writing that students present their opinion there. The argument is extremely important because it is the students way of saying this is my opinion. This is how I found an issue, I found a problem and this is my position towards that problem. So it's extremely important, definitely, it's a way of finding, of course, diagnosing what the components of the situation are, what whatever she's talking about, the issue of the context of. And of course, what's her position? So it's extremely important.

Speaker 1

What do you focus on when teaching writing arguments in academic writing?

Speaker 2

Yeah. So I. It's a two-part process. The first one is telling the student, making the student interested in an issue. So I believe that if the student is not, for instance, if let's say I want her to write about the environment. If the student is not aware that there is a problem, there is an issue. She's not passionate, made passionate about it, she wouldn't diagnose the problem. She wouldn't find it. She wouldn't pinpoint this is the issue that I'm not going to write about. This is the first step of the process. The other step of the process, what's your position? Find your position, articulate your position, and this is I think this is going to be important in building that argument in an effective way.

Speaker 1

What do your recommend that might help students to improve their arguments?

Speaker 2

When they're of course, writing professionally, they. I wouldn't say they use language that for instance, like pronouns that are the first person pronouns I don't recommend. Yes, I don't recommend that. So they need a stronger language. Specific adjectives that really reflects their position. So I. Suggest to them or give them for instance, adjectives that specifically describe like a list to help them that you can use these words. You can use these adjectives in order to describe what you're feeling about this. What's your position about this? What do you believe? And it I think it's going to be very helpful.

Speaker 1

What do you think makes a text more organised and coherent?

Speaker 2

Planning, planning, planning is extremely important, and this is what I've done actually in my book. So I dedicated a whole chapter to building mind maps. I don't think we appreciate them enough. Mapping is extremely important because of course it helps you make your argument. Specific, more specific or topic even more specific. And of course, when you're planning your ideas from the most general to the specific in order to support your argument. So planning is a major step in making your writing coherent. Even if I'm if I'm writing an article or in to an or journal or a paper if I don't plan, then it's all over the place. She has to start mapping. She definitely has to and that's why I think an initial step to teaching students how to before we teach them topic sentences for teach them how to plan. Teaching them mind mapping so that they know how to organise their ideas. instead of just teaching them, right this topic and then. They're guaranteed if you don't teach them mapping and planning, they're guaranteed to put all the ideas in in in the wrong place.

Speaker 1

What makes the text more persuasive? how what words you use to write? Do you think that the students think about the readers?

Speaker 2

So, from my experience, they don't initially in their first draught, they don't, they're more concerned. With finding ideas and then putting these ideas in the right place, I think this is the most the major concern in the first stress. But when do they really think that there's an eye watching? It's if there is. If you give them the chance to submit another draught after, you're correct. So you s do some formative assessment, you point out their errors, then they'll be they will think about the audience and she's going to point this out. Or, she's going to read this in a different way. This is this idea is in the wrong position.

Speaker 1

Can you explain how students build strong arguments with the readers in academic writing?

Speaker 2

So I'm teaching 18th century novel and this year or this term?. And what I did was after each lecture, they were extremely, extremely weak. So what I did was I ask a question and then I give them at the end of lecture at least half an hour lecture, I give them a chance to write, to answer that question in one paragraph. So from the point that we started the term that we did that in every lecture, almost. So from the point of the of the beginning of the term I hope that what I did helped students. If teachers were given them the time they would do a lot to their students and support them in that. So they're write. And then I , I bring every student to a one-on-one conversation. First session or first attempt is this is what you did in grammar spelling this is. What you did?. And then other sessions said, what's wrong with the argument. Well, what did? You, was it correct? Does this make sense? Use for this. Does this deserve another paragraph? When they were aware of that, there's an audience reading mind and the process of reading. Then of course, that changed the way there.

Speaker 1

What is your focus when you give students feedback on their academic writing?

Speaker 2

The focus, of course, is number one is language. And of course, how coherent is your writing? Does it make sense?. Does every sentence follow the other one in a way that makes sense? Do you identify a topic and then support it with an example, a specific example. This is the really what I do focus on so a specific example. And that's what I tried to tell them start with a sentence that has an adjective. And then give me an example from first, is the novel or the paper and this is how they should approach it and attempt to write.

Speaker 1

I have here, an example of academic writing, can you answer some questions? Which paragraph do you think is better and why? What do think the student needs to improve this paragraph?

Speaker 2

It is looking a good example of essay. I could say it is advanced student’s writing. I could say the introduction is good because it is well written it concluded the topic sentences and good introduction with definition of the topic. The students might be need more justification or support sentences but this depend on the word account.

Speaker 1

Can you explain the importance of using these words in academic writing; however, finally, such as, to sum up, I agree?

Speaker 2

Yes, definitely. I think they do a threshold they stand as a threshold into another idea, but the students sometimes they're misuse them. I do believe that's didn't misuse them because they again, they're in and methodically being taught use these words and told use these words. But students use them for the sake of using them, when actually they should use them sparingly when they needed if there is a transition from one idea into another idea. This is when they're used, definitely.

Speaker 1

Why do you think that they misuse them?

Speaker 2

Because they think that, OK, my teacher tells me use these. I'm going to them it's guaranteed the mark, which is not the case definitely. Another point even dismissing the meaning. Definitely, that is why also, there should be of course application is important, but when you're teaching writing theoretically, sit down with them, tell them the meaning of adjectives that, for instance, when they're quoting. Tell them the meaning. When do I use this specific word? What's the context of using it? There's a better word. There's a more effective word. Instead of using for instance, the same word over over and over again, you can actually use. There's an area of words that can that can be used and including connective words, yes.

Speaker 1

To what extent it is important to correct the students' mistakes in regard of use conjunctions words in academic writing?

Speaker 2

It is important that help the teachers to understand the students’ moving from one idea to another. So the teachers should be correct the students mistake or misuse of these words to make students really aware about the importance of the correct use of these words.

Speaker 1

How do you teach these words?

Speaker 2

As I said that the best way to teach these conjunctions or linking word in academic writing is to be stay with the student and say this is the meaning of this word and. Definitely through correcting their academic writing.

Speaker 1

Do you recommend any training course that might help improve teaching EFL academic writing?

Speaker 2

More and more practice and training for both teachers and students as some of the teachers focus on teaching the content of the modules but never point to the important of the writers’ voice or thinking of the readers and this really make the text lack of coherence.