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Advance in Academic Writing: Integrating Research, Critical Thinking, Academic Reading and Writing, 1st ed. (2017)

Steve Marshall

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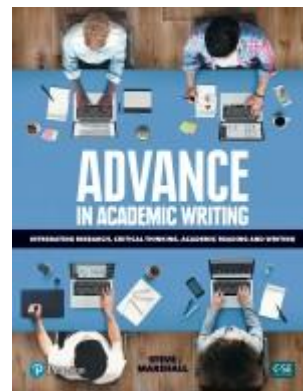
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Reviewed by İsmail Yaman

Ondokuz Mayıs University, Turkey

ismail.yaman@omu.edu.tr



Academic writing is an indispensable task for most graduate students and academics regardless of their fields of study. As English has become a lingua franca all around the world, developing academic writing skills in English has become almost a sine-qua-non for millions of researchers from various academic circles ranging from law, engineering, and medicine to linguistics and psychology. However, it is not so easy to attain a satisfying level in academic writing that involves several dimensions like critical thinking, reading, research, and writing. *Advance in Academic Writing: Integrating Research, Critical Thinking, Academic Reading and Writing* is a recent publication that aims to help those who want to become effective academic writers in their fields. It addresses users of English at C1 level which indicates effective operational proficiency or advanced level in the target language.

The book is composed of four main parts along with an appendices section at the end. Part 1 consists of four chapters that offer introductory information on writing and research. Chapter 1 introduces seven stages of the writing process while Chapter 2 covers main types of research like empirical vs. non-empirical and quantitative vs. qualitative research, stages involved in the research process, and related key vocabulary. Chapter 3 mentions active and critical reading as a prerequisite for effective academic writing and focuses on steps like skimming, scanning, paraphrasing, annotating, and summarizing while Chapter 4 handles the productive dimension of writing and discusses ways to avoid plagiarism, adjusting writing styles, writing reference lists in APA and MLA formats, and writing response papers.

Part 2, composed of five chapters, is devoted to essay sections. While Chapter 5 elaborates how to develop and present coherent arguments and avoid logical fallacies, Chapter 6, 7, and 8 discuss how to write effective academic paragraphs, introductions, and conclusions respectively. Chapter 9 provides a review of the previous chapters and offers various tasks to help readers consolidate the academic writing infrastructure they have built.

Part 3 concentrates on the production of full manuscripts for different academic purposes. Chapter 10 discusses how to describe processes and present statistical data through sample manuscripts while Chapter 11 covers writing effective arguments in essays through sample abstracts of recently published articles on smartphones. Chapter 12 examines how to write effective comparison essays through sample writings on the debate over nuclear versus other types of energy. While Chapter 13 provides information on writing about problems and solutions through sample writings on language loss, Chapter 14 focuses on writing about causes and effects through model writings on extreme weather. Chapter 15 provides a review of the previous five chapters through further sample writings and consolidation tasks.

Part 4 constitutes a mini-handbook for writing effective sentences for academic writing in English; and the covered 14 units offer detailed information on issues like tense and aspect, clauses and sentences, punctuation, participle phrases, passive voice, sentence fragments, subject-verb agreement, conditional sentences, parallel structure, modal auxiliary verbs, inversion for emphasis, and so on. Each unit here provides extensive explanations with various examples and assigns tasks to learners to practice the covered subject. As writing effective sentences paves the way for well-written paragraphs and manuscripts, plenty of sentence practice offered in the units can be highly useful.

The “Appendices” section comprises four concise parts respectively on frequently used linking words in academic writing, APA and MLA citation styles -- both of which are commonly preferred by quality journals all around the world, and 35 mistakes to avoid in academic writing. These parts provide such much-needed pieces of information on academic writing in a concise and to-the-point fashion for learners.

The book possesses several assets that aim to contribute to the improvement of academic writing skills of the readers. First, the appeal of the book has its reflections at first sight and it does not mislead those who want to judge the book by its cover. The charming cover design on a blue background provides the impression of a quality resource, which gives this sizeable book a real head start. As for the inside, the pages are colourful -mostly blue and then green- and the content is supported by rich relevant visuals.

Second, the book holds an almost-perfect chapter organization through which the author provides a step-by-step guideline for various aspects of academic writing. Each chapter starts with a chapter-specific opening page quote like: “The two most engaging powers of an author: new things are made familiar, and familiar things are made new” by Samuel Johnson (p. 3) and “Books are like mirrors: if a fool looks in, you cannot expect a genius to look out” by J. K. Rowling (p. 49). The quotes serve as effective hooks for the chapters and enable learners to reflect on the upcoming content. These are followed by exploratory tasks which ask learners to randomly write as many ideas as possible to questions like: “What kind of writer you are?” (p. 3); “What is academic integrity, and what is plagiarism?” (p. 75); “Which is more important in academic writing: effective language or convincing arguments?” (p. 103). Then, as part of active and critical reading, authentic academic texts on the chapter theme are covered as points of departure for the following steps of critical thinking, vocabulary, grammar, style, and writing tasks. The covered

diverse readings are mostly excerpts from current research published in reputable journals. The chapters give tasks at each step to ensure the active involvement of the learners through a learning-by-doing principle. The learners are also directed to the Part 4 and Appendices section for more detailed information on specific points like sentence structure and citation styles. A final writing task is offered in each chapter as a key to let learners turn their learning into production. Such tasks are accompanied by checklists or review sheets for self- and peer reviews.

Third, the book comes with an access code for online *My eLab* tool. This autonomy-enhancing tool provides further consolidation activities on vocabulary, grammar, critical thinking, critical reading, academic style, and writing, sample student essays, documents like peer review sheets, and the e-text of the book. The direction to this tool is provided in the chapters through marginal instructions like “Find supplementary reading, writing, and critical-thinking activities online” (p.144) and “Practice Chapter 13 vocabulary online” (p. 281). This online tool is highly important in that it provides extra self-study support for the learners and integrates CALL into the process of developing academic writing skills.

Ironically, one possible drawback about the book has something to do with the last asset I have mentioned. This gorgeous book with an almost flawless content and organization appears quite assertive to become a standing resource for academic writing; however, the one-year limitation for access to *My eLab* may pose a real handicap for the owners of the book. A longer period for free-access should have been offered.

Overall, the book turns out to be a worthy resource that enables learners to practice active and critical reading, critical thinking, academic vocabulary, academic writing style, effective sentence structure and grammar on the covered sample authentic academic texts, and finally academic writing in an integrated manner. I strongly recommend it for academic writing classes at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels in both EFL and ESL contexts and for those who aim to develop academic writing skills in English through self-study.

İsmail Yaman is an Assistant Professor in the ELT Programme at Ondokuz Mayıs University. He holds an MA degree from the ELT Programme at Ondokuz Mayıs University and a PhD degree from the ELT Programme at Gazi University. His research interests cover teaching language skills and current trends in language education.