

BOOK REVIEW OF *INTRODUCTION TO ACADEMIC WRITING (2007)* BY ALICE OSHIMA & ANN HOGUE

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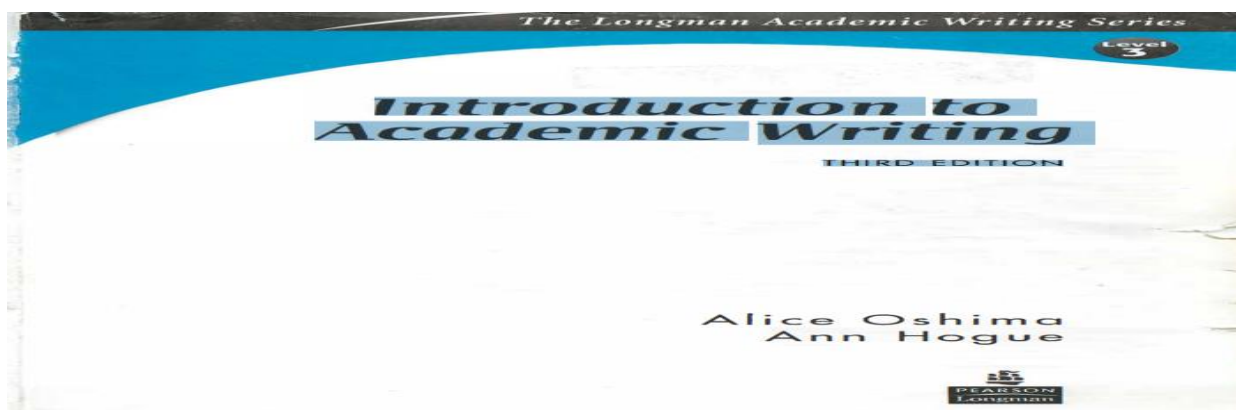
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Abstract

The book is a comprehensive and accessible guide designed to help students develop essential writing skills for academic purposes. The book focuses on fundamental writing techniques, such as paragraph structure, coherence, and clarity, providing a step-by-step approach to writing essays and other academic texts. The third edition has been updated with more practice exercises, examples, and a clear progression of skills to guide learners from simple paragraph writing to more complex essays. It is structured in a very cohesive and coherent manner.

The book is divided into chapters covering various writing forms, including descriptive, process, comparison/contrast, and opinion essays. Each chapter explains the type of writing and is followed by practical exercises to reinforce the skills taught. Special attention is given to paragraph structure, logical division of ideas, and the importance of clear thesis statements and topic sentences. This edition also introduces strategies for revising and editing and provides tips for improving overall writing fluency. Following is the part wise presentation of the key concepts in this valuable book in the academic world.

Part I

Paragraph Structure

The "Paragraph Structure" chapter of *Introduction to Academic Writing* gives an overview of the main components of an effective paragraph. It highlights the importance of a topic sentence backed by evidence and facts and a concluding sentence that reinforces the central focus and connects

thematically with the topic sentence of the next paragraph. The chapter is concerned with the process of binding ideas together and forming a sequence, demonstrating to the student how to weave ideas in a coherent sequence. The complex concept of theme/rhyme thematic development within a paragraph has been explained in easy to understand manner. Hands-on examples and mini-lessons show the learners how to compose good and effective paragraphs in assignments and academic compositions.

In paragraph writing, the first step is prewriting, which helps to collect ideas. After selecting the topic, many strategies can be used to gather main concepts, such as starting to make a list of several words or phrases, and not write whenever ideas about the topic do not stop. After collecting the ideas, the next step is to write these concepts with an outline. Applying the outline, make a rough draft. After this, without thinking about grammar, spelling, or punctuation, write a rough draft. Errors will be set after drafting some new ideas, which may also include a concluding sentence that can be added at the end.

In paragraph writing, several conjunctions are used to build cohesion and coherence among different sentences, such as coordinating conjunctions. Its types work differently in a sentence according to the needs, some for joining purposes join one part or ideas of a sentence with the other part or idea of the sentence, usually with “and”. To make contrast or show opposition, “but” also works as a coordinating conjunction. In compound sentences before a coordinating conjunction, a comma can be used, but not in a simple sentence.

In academic writing, a paragraph usually has three parts: a topic sentence, usually the first sentence in the paragraph. Some writers put the topic sentence at the end, but many prefer it at the beginning. It helps understand the paragraph more easily. Supporting sentences explain the main ideas of the topic. The concluding sentence summarizes the topic sentence with different wording that helps to understand the core idea about the topic.

In academic writing, descriptive writing is a way of writing in which writers try to appeal to the senses. During descriptive writing, a reader can imagine the object, person, feelings, tastes, smells, sounds, and place in his or her mind. This is a style of writing in which the writer wants to give each and every detail about his subject by capturing the interest and focus of his or her reader by involving all the senses of the readers.

Comparing and contrasting is a technique that every person uses to differentiate between two ideas, phenomena, persons, objects, or realities. It is a useful skill that is also used in paragraph writing. A writer, by applying compare and contrast, gives a twofold picture about any topic or issue, like the advantages and disadvantages of any topic that deals in detail and describes each and every aspect of the topic in a detailed way. By doing this, the writer gives detailed information about the difference.

Descriptive Paragraphs

In the chapter, students are taught how to produce engaging and comprehensive descriptions that interest the reader through the descriptive flow. It highlights the importance of sensory information (precise words for spatial arrangement) to create a vivid picture of a person, place, or object. The chapter further discusses techniques for preserving coherence and unity in descriptive writing. Through guided examples and practice provided in this part of the book, students can develop the ability to present images loaded with emotions in the paragraphs they want to write to serve the effective descriptive purposes.

Definition Paragraphs

The "Definition Paragraphs" chapter in Introduction to Academic Writing focuses on teaching students how to clearly explain the meaning of a term or concept within a paragraph. It highlights the importance of accurate wording, illustrations, and descriptions to render complex and abstract concepts comprehensible. The chapter then draws attention to tactics, e.g., differentiating between formal, extended, and personal definitions of terms and using transitions to guarantee coherence. Students learn to create effective and informative definition paragraphs for academic use by using guided practice. This part is particularly useful for beginner researchers in academia who struggle to sandwich the borrowed ideas in their paragraphs effectively, impressively and convincingly.

Part II

THE ESSAY (Essay Organization)

The "Essay Organization" chapter in Introduction to Academic Writing focuses on the essential components of structuring an academic essay. It leads the students to structure their thoughts systematically, from the beginning through a stimulating introduction that features a clearly expressed thesis statement. The body of the chapter contains evidence and illustrative examples that are used to support the thesis statement. Furthermore, the chapter stresses the finality of the conclusion, which recapitulates the most important points and substantiates the thesis statement. Building the context with examples it provides excellent exercises to teach and train the learners on how the writing of essays can be best structured for clarity, coherence, and a clear argument. This edition is an acclaimed textbook that provides an exhaustive overview of the writing basics required in academics. The book is mainly designed as a study guide for students of English as a Second Language, but it can be useful for anyone wanting to enhance his/her writing and academic skills. This new edition has been developed based on the feedback on previous editions as it incorporates new material and adds exercises to better support students in acquiring practical and applicable writing skills that would benefit their academic studies.

Like the topic sentence of a paragraph, the thesis sentence (the last sentence of an introduction) tells about the topic of the essay. After the topic or introductory statement, the body of the essay starts with one or more paragraphs. The conclusion is a review or theme of the main points that were discussed in the body. Just as a paragraph, an essay has cohesion and coherence with the use of transitional verbs at the beginning of the body paragraphs. That organized essay in a logical, persuasive way creates ease and interest for readers.

Key Features

Clear Explanations and Examples:

The major strength of the book is its well-written and easy-to-understand definitions. Complex concepts such as thesis statements, topic sentences, and paragraph unity are broken down into easily digestible steps. Every chapter comes with many examples so that can be applied practically. Likewise, in the "Process Paragraphs" chapter, the authors divide the process of writing a process essay section by section and into individual steps, with each step supported by an example.

Focus on Academic Writing Conventions:

The book emphasizes the importance of academic conventions such as logical organization, clarity, and proper argumentation. Such conventions are clarified and discussed in detail to make it understandable not only what to write (how to write) but also why writing in academics takes specific shapes and structures.

Updated Content and Exercises:

Examples and exercises in this edition are updated to reflect current academic prose styles. Furthermore, it provides enriched portions of the editing and revising process, enabling students to enhance their drafts further. Revision recommendations are especially relevant because they force students to think about refining their work.

Practical and Interactive Approach:

This book is highly practical. At the end of each chapter, interactive exercises allow students to practice the concepts learned. The exercises are intended to involve students and encourage them to use their prior learning to inform their writing work.

Strengths

a. Structured Learning:

The book's systematic format is very useful for classroom work and self-education. Students can be helped to achieve sequential development, from simple to more complex writing tasks.

b. For exemplarity and Accessibility:

Oshima and Hogue's writing is straightforward and unambiguous. The book is not cumbersome and even the students new to academic writing can take immense benefit out of it.

c. Wide Range of Topics:

From basic to more advanced forms of paragraphs to more advanced forms of text, such as essays, the book addresses a wide range of writing tasks, preparing students to tackle diverse academic tasks.

d. Comprehensive Coverage:

The paper addresses each of the core components of academic writing, from grammar and sentence construction (as well as spelling) to overall essay structure (including structuring) and paragraph cohesion. Thus, it provides a broad guide for both novice and intermediate writers.

e. Aspects of Writing, Self Editing, Peer Editing

This book masterfully deals with all aspects of writing, from sentence structure to essay writing. Rhetorical devices are explained from paragraph to essay in a more sequential way, such as definition, description, process, logical division of ideas, and comparison and contrast. An important academic skill, summary writing, is also introduced. Several models and practice exercises are also included with separate worksheets for self-editing and peer editing.

f. New Try it Out! Practical Exercises of Writing

Models and practice items have been updated or replaced. Old favorites have been retained, sometimes in a different form. New Try It Out! Exercises allow students to try out new skills informally, without the pressure of being graded on their efforts. Journal writing has been added as an option. Instructions and topic suggestions appear as Appendix A at the end of the book.

Weakness

a. Limited Focus on Advanced Skills:

Although the book is an excellent starting point for intermediate and advanced learners, it does not prove adequate for those who seek to achieve heightened proficiency in complex academic writing skills, e.g., critical analysis or research-based writing. The book, while more oriented to basic skills, will probably need some additional chapters for the students who want to progress to a more advanced level of proficiency.

b. Potential Redundancy for Advanced Learners:

Exercises and explanations may also appear redundant to students who possess an already strong working knowledge of general academic writing skills. Higher-level content could have been

brought into the content to provide a better flow between learners who want to move towards higher-level information.

c. Without Citations and Sources

This book is more focused on rhetorical modes, organization, and rhetorical devices that do not cover citations, sources, and references, which are an essential part of academic writing skills and a necessary portion in academic writing at a higher level.

d. Lack of Digital Technology

Moreover, it did not deal with digital technology, which has become an essential and useful part of academic writing.

e. More Focus on Western Contexts and Less Focus on Cultural and Linguistic Backgrounds

Several examples and exercises are built on a Western context, which could not fulfill the requirements of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Globally relevant models could make it more comprehensive.

Conclusion

Generally, a very good and usable foundation for learning academic writing is provided by *Introduction to Academic Writing (Third Edition)* by Alice Oshima and Ann Hogue. Its clear explanations, structured approach, and practical exercises make it an invaluable tool for ESL/EFL students and anyone new to academic writing. Incorporating recent developments and new exercises in this third edition increases its utility and ensures students are prepared to succeed in learning settings. Although the book is not appropriate for advanced readers, it can be very helpful in building a strong base in academic writing.

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