WRITING A TEXTBOOK FOR ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES

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Keywords: *Textbook, English for Academic Purposes*

Introduction

This article is but the description of an attempt at writing a textbook in English for academic purposes. The intent is to write a rather practical textbook addressing the immediate needs of the undergraduate students which have yet to acquire the basic language skills needed to use and enrich the English language. As such it is fundamentally nothing more than a presentation of the different perspectives on this process.

The target public

One was, of course, well aware of the existence of excellently written textbooks on the on various English for academic purposes topics. The lecture of the existing English for academic purposes textbooks reveals the fact that they mostly target the undergraduate students which may be classified according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, often called the CEFR, in the B2, C1 and C2 levels, or anyone who possess upper intermediate skills, going thorough advanced skills, and ending with the proficiency skills. (See Figure 1.)

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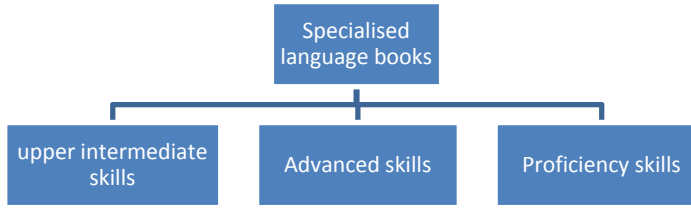


Figure 1: A graphic representation of the range of language skills covered by existing specialised language books

However, one was also very much aware of the fact that there is a sizeable group of students which possess little if any English language skills, and thus may be considered for all intents and purposes as beginners, according to the same Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. As far as these students are concerned, the existing books on specialised languages may be perceived as something of a hurdle rather than a helpful tool in the process of acquiring specialised language skills.

Accordingly, this particular language textbook was meant to fill in a gap on the shelves of any English for academic purposes library, by addressing the needs of beginners in a basic and more encouraging way. (See Figure 2.)

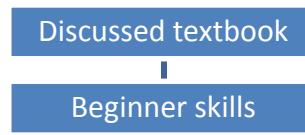


Figure 2: A graphic representation of the range of language skills covered by the discussed book

The approach

Most English for academic purposes textbooks have been written for students, who have already acquired functional English skills and, therefore, these textbooks focus mostly on training of

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academic vocabulary with little if any focus on elements of grammar. (See Figure 3.)

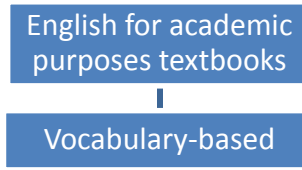


Figure 3: A graphic representation of the approach of most English for academic purposes textbooks

But, in the process of teaching, one is confronted with the fact that a sizeable number of students have not previously acquired functional English language skills. Under the given circumstances, focusing mostly on the acquisition and proper use of academic vocabulary is simply not enough for the development of functional academic language skills. This explains why a complete and utter rethinking of the approach is an imperative. With this in mind, this book was written in an intuitive fashion, as the logic behind this textbook was to use grammar as a starter of the academic language learning process. (See Figure 4.)

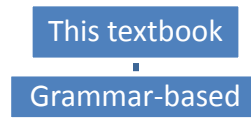


Figure 4: A graphic representation of the grammar-based approach of this textbook

All units of this textbook begin with the presentation of elements of grammar. But, while the first unit is meant to introduce the students to the idea of irregular verbs, the other units are slightly more generous and allow for academic terminology to be added to the admixture in the ensuing exercises. In other words, the approach attempts to achieve the goal of teaching students academic vocabulary which is built in grammatical structures. (See Figure 5.)

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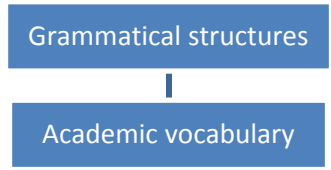


Figure 5: A graphic representation of the idea of teaching specialised vocabulary within grammatical structures

Minimalism

In an attempt to address the needs of its target public, one of the basic principles of this book was to make this book extremely easy to read and, of course, understand.

Accordingly, one had to keep the length of most sentences as short as possible and still render the meaning. One could thus say that the roots of the comprehension of the language in this textbook are based on short sentences. (See Figure 6.)

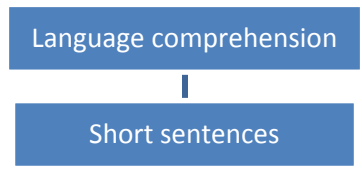


Figure 6: A graphic representation of the language comprehension of the textbook based on short sentences

However, the very use of short sentences is a reminder of the fact that one cannot expect the undergraduate students to understand very complex ideas and principles immediately. With this in mind, resources such as time and thought are not invested in the production of elegant and subtle expressions. In a more realistic and, ultimately, more pragmatic fashion, the students are presented with only the most basic of information which have been deemed necessary for the time being. (See Figure 7.)

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Figure 7 A graphic representation of the idea of short sentences containing basic information

To cut a long story short, the students are to be provided with basic information on the make up of the language in the theoretical part and, then, they are expected to rely on these pieces of information and make use of it the practical part which ensues. (See Figure 8.)



Figure 8 A graphic representation of the idea of basic information used in both the theoretical part and the practical part

In the theoretical part one is provided with explanations in the simplest language and then, to make these ideas clearer, one can read one or more examples written in the very same fashion. (See Figure 9.)

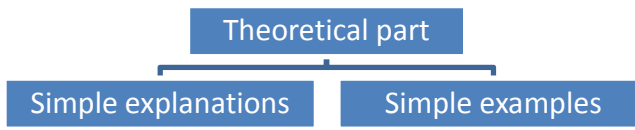


Figure 9 A graphic representation of the of the idea of a theoretical part made up of simple explanations and simple examples

The practical part which, as traditional logics would have it, is also very much influenced by the simplicity of the language used. The students are briefed by the simple language of rubrics which are followed by simple tasks.

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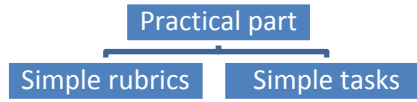


Figure 9 A graphic representation of the of the idea of a practical part consisting of simple rubrics and simple tasks

Modularity

Particular attention had to be paid to the manner in which this textbook on specialised language was conceived and written. In terms of overall visible internal structure, this textbook may be perceived as a collection of several functional units. (See Figure 10.)

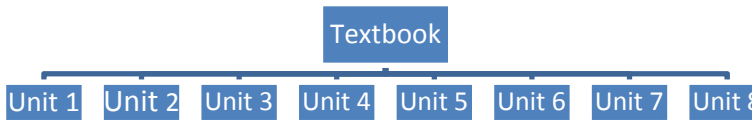


Figure 10: A graphic representation of the internal structure of this textbook

At this point one might feel the need to go in depth and understand a bit more of the structure of this book. As one may have noticed in the previous section, each unit may, for each and every practical and didactic purposes, be divided into its integral parts. (See Figure 11.)

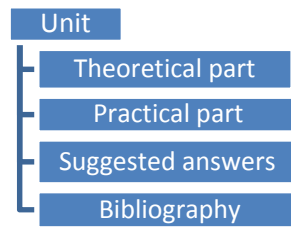


Figure 11: A graphic representation of the structure of each unit

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Accumulation

This textbook is not extremely long writing for the purpose of this attempt was not to create an extensive work but rather to show that through a simple approach and in a relatively short time a student can learn some of the basics of the English language and of the specialised vocabulary one is interested in, respectively.

To achieve this goal, it is impetuously necessary to realise that one cannot expect immediate results but, rather, try to slowly ease into the subject matter. In order to build the competence of the students from the ground up one needs to take it one step at the time.

According to this logic each unit adds another layer of knowledge, another notion pertaining to the language onto the previous one. The intended result of this process is that one may posses the necessary skills for solving relatively more complicated tasks in the final module. (See Figures 12 and 13.)

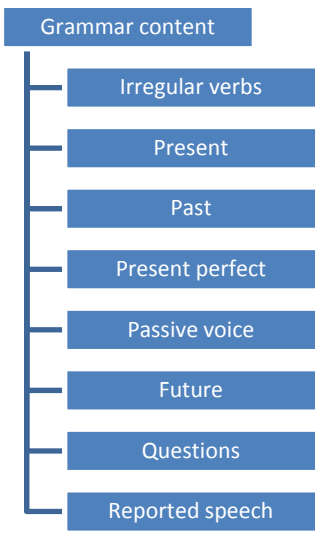


Figure 12: A graphic representation of the grammar content of the textbook

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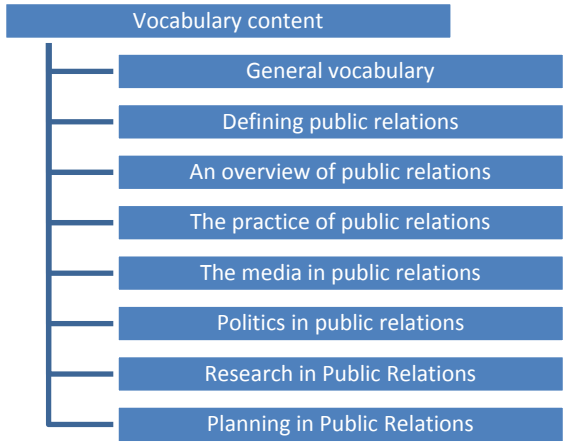


Figure 13: A graphic representation of the vocabulary content of the textbook

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REDACTAREA LUCRĂRILOR ÎN ENGLEZĂ CONFORM NORMELOR ACADEMICE

Rezumat

Cuvinte-cheie: *texte, engleza conform normelor academice*

Scrierea unui manual cu limbaj specializat în limba engleză este un lucru destul de dificil fiindcă trebuie luate în considerare câteva probleme. În primul rând, trebuie să definim publicul țintă căruia i se va adresa acest manual. Având în vedere acest lucru, trebuie să se ia o decizie corectă în privința abordării. Aceasta va determina tipul de limbaj utilizat. Cu toate acestea, pentru a face acest manual mai ușor de utilizat, trebuie acordată atenție economiei structurii generale. Și, nu în ultimul rând, nu trebuie să piardă din vedere scopul fundamental, care este obținerea de competențe linguale.

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