

English for Academic Research: Writing Exercises

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English for Academic Research: Writing Exercises. Adrian Wallwork. 2013. New York: Springer. xv. 190 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4614-4297-4 (printcopy), 978-1-4614-4298-1 (ebook).

The atmosphere of academic life is usually dominated by a 'publish or perish' system in which the employment, promotion, and tenure of university lecturers as well as the achievements of graduate students and other researchers alike are judged upon their publications. The chances for publication of one's research in prestigious international journals are determined by two major factors: the quality of research conducted and the quality of English used in reporting the findings (e.g., Perry, 2005). This presents problems for academic writers, especially those writing in a second language, and Wallwork's book is targeting these writers in particular. Consumers of research want clear and quick access to information. For this reason, academic researchers must learn to write with clarity and precision.

Wallwork intends to produce a series of clear, easy-to-use, practical books on the different aspects of the world of academic work for the non-native speakers of English, ranging from minute points concerning grammar, usage, style of academic English, and vocabulary, to the tips and tricks used in academic correspondence, conference presentations, and research papers/manuscripts.

English for Academic Research: Writing Exercises is intended for non-English-speaking graduate and doctoral students, and researchers. This book can be used in conjunction with *English for Writing Research Papers*. The volume introduces and illustrates all the writing skills that will contribute to improving research manuscripts and enhancing the likelihood of their acceptance. Wallwork agrees that "if a paper is not readable, it cannot be published" (p. vii).

This book consists of ten chapters or sections. Each section conforms to the following distinctive structure. It starts with a tabular abstract, i.e., a topic list of the writing skills in that section that are cross-referenced to two of Wallwork's other books in the series: *English for writing research papers* and *English for re-*

search: Usage, style, and grammar: Underlying theoretical issues for the skills are sometimes given under them. Next, instructions to exercises related to each skill are given in *italics*, followed by examples shaded in grey. The exercises have possible answers or keys underneath that will also serve self-study in cases where examples are not provided. Exercises move from individual to holistic. That is, each exercise unit is concerned with one individual item but several points are simultaneously practiced in some exercise units. The exercises are actual examples of errors encountered by the author in editing manuscripts.

Section 1 “Punctuation and Spelling” exemplifies the problems non-natives encounter with using commas, semicolons, brackets, hyphens, capitalization, and so on. Section 2 “Word Order Practices”, asks readers to rewrite sentences, using the most typical English word order that best helps readers assimilate information easily and quickly.

Introducing sentence types, Section 3, is concerned with exercises on dividing up long sentences and paragraphs into shorter and more manageable ones. There are also exercises on putting the sentences and paragraphs into logical order. Section 4 “Link Words: Connecting Phrases and Sentences Together” walks the reader through connecting ideas, such as logical progression, use of link words, making evaluations or contrasts, repetition, etc., to facilitate the understanding of the text.

Research-oriented writing should be concise. Therefore, Section 5 “Being Concise and Removing Redundancy” shows how to revise the writing to be concise. Manuscript writers are thus suggested to delete redundant words, link words, phrases, and sentences, or to replace a phrase with a word, with no other changes.

In English, words are not related to one another in terms of gender or case. Consequently, ambiguity might arise in understanding what words refer to. To disambiguate the reading and facilitate understanding, Section 6 “Ambiguity and Political Correctness” practices repetition of key words, the use of –ing form, sentence modification, and gender-neutral sentences.

It is crucial that non-native speakers acquire paraphrasing to avoid plagiarism and identical repetition of their own statements later in the paper. Hence, Section 7 “Paraphrasing and Avoiding Plagiarism” works on generic words or phrases, and statistics, acceptable to use without having to use quotation marks.

Section 8 “Defining, Comparing, Evaluating, and Highlighting” illustrates how an author should differentiate and/or compare his/her findings with that of other researchers, and thus highlight the findings. As a result, it proposes exercises on defining, confirming evidence of researchers, showing the importance of the findings, comparing research elements like Methodology, Results, etc., and evaluating.

Section 9 “Anticipating Possible Objections, Indicating Level of Certainty, Discussing Limitations, Hedging, Future Work” puts forward exercises on how to support one’s view against another view in the literature, how to indicate certainty level, how to discuss limitations, how to tone down the strength of statements, and where to hedge. These and other such exercises are discussed in the context of the different sections of a research paper, e.g., Results, Discussion, and so on.

The book concludes with Section 10 “Writing Each Section of a Paper” wherein Wallwork provides practice on the structure of a research paper. This is done by giving general guidelines, patterns, or specific instructions on how to organize and improve the different sections of a paper – from the Abstracts to the Acknowledgments. Unlike the other sections, fewer exercises and answer keys are given in this section. In fact, the skills worked on in Section 1–9 are brought together here.

Within 10 practical sections, Wallwork briefly touches upon important and basic pieces of knowledge and experience on how to improve one’s manuscript for publication purposes. The volume avoids unnecessary jargon and redundancy and contains a sufficient number of exercises, which are authentic and have not been produced commercially. Consequently, the exercises are more tangible.

Notwithstanding the above positive points, the volume contains some shortcomings that might be improved in future imprints to serve the readers well. For one thing, the design of such a book could be made much more user-friendly; the font used is not eye-friendly and the structure of the items contained is a bit routine. In addition, the volume is in need of a thorough and careful proofreading and editing since it contains a number of mistakes, especially given that the book is intended as a guide for non-native speakers. At times, there are incorrect answers in the keys. Repetitious exercises need to be removed or modified.

Next, Keywords reveal the focus of a study, and help organize searches of online material. Exercises on what proper words to include as Keywords would have

added to the book's usefulness. Another possible area of coverage (for future editions) is the construction of research questions. These must communicate clearly the main focus of the study and should be worded carefully.

Yet, the few points raised above do not at all devalue its worth. In fact, *English for Academic Research: Writing Exercises* teaches numerous points in a self-study manner that makes it a very useful addition to the toolkit of anyone with a good command of English and a keen interest to publish his/her research in a professional journal.

References

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About the Reviewer

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