Teaching academic writing: An introduction for teachers of second language writers


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Teaching academic writing: An introduction for teachers of second language writers discusses the key concepts and issues of teaching academic writing in second language (L2) contexts and provides the reader with some practical suggestions for teaching approaches which teachers of L2 academic writing can apply to their own contexts.

The book consists of nine chapters on a variety of topics relevant for teachers of second language writers. Each chapter is organized in much the same way to help readers gain a greater understanding of teaching L2 students academic writing by combining the academic concepts the text poses with their own teaching philosophy or experience. To do this, each starts by posing thought-provoking questions concerning controversial issues in L2 academic writing, then offers a discussion of the issues from theoretical viewpoints, and concludes by providing classroom implications as well as tasks and techniques. The first chapter, for example, provides an overview of crucial issues in the teaching of academic writing in L2 contexts in terms of writing in academic settings, approaches to knowledge, academic literacies, cross-cultural issues, disciplinary differences, discourse communities, and generation 1.5 students.

The remaining chapters of the book continue to follow this pattern as they address special issues in the teaching of academic writing; beginning with chapter 2 which describes the nature of academic writing including the process of academic writing, textual and structural features in academic texts, and the relationship between writers individual internal processes and external environments in producing academic texts.

The next two chapters discuss issues which instructors need to be aware of when designing their courses. Chapter 3 discusses both theoretical and practical approaches for conducting a needs analysis by explaining the procedures and providing nine different ways to collect information about needs, and chapter 4 explores (from socio-historical viewpoints) how teaching approaches for academic writing have developed providing pedagogical and practical examples of the approaches.

The following two chapters address issues directly related to student success. Chapter 5 clarifies the role of vocabulary in academic writing and discusses how vocabulary can be taught in an academic writing course in order to empower L2 students. And, from intercultural perspectives, chapter 6 carefully looks at the teaching of academic writing as a way to help students develop their L2 linguistic, rhetorical, and cultural knowledge to actively participate in writing classrooms.

The next chapters discuss the negotiation of meaning. Chapter 7 addresses the nature of feedback in L2 academic writing including both teacher and peer response and suggests some ways to provide students with effective feedback on their written texts. Chapter 8 then discusses how to assess students academic writing as a way to help improve their learning.

The last chapter of this book serves a resource for instructors by providing an annotated bibliography of both books and online sources for teaching academic writing. Overall, Teaching academic writing: An introduction for teachers of second language writers proposes practical approaches for the teaching of academic writing in L2 settings. One of the shortcomings of the book, however, is that it treats the issues of L2 academic writing very generally. Hence, it does not sufficiently address them from both theoretical and methodological viewpoints. Another limitation is that, since it uses the word ESL in general; instead, it leaves a significant question of who is included in this category. However, even with these shortcomings, this book is effective for novice teachers of L2 academic writing because it discusses the significance of academic writing being a contextually situated activity. This book is also significant because it offers these teachers many opportunities to build basic knowledge of L2 academic writing from practical viewpoints and to explore teaching approaches which are the most appropriate for their own given L2 writing contexts.
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