

«WRITING FOR PUBLICATION» COURSE: EXPERIENCE AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

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This paper presents an overview of the professional language training enhancement course «Writing for Publication» developed for Tomsk Polytechnic University (TPU) content teachers who are engaged in research and aimed at publishing results of their scientific work in international journals. In addition, future developments of the course are described.

Key words: *scientific writing, scientific research paper, publishing in English.*

For non-native speakers, scientific writing in English as the language of international importance is a highly challenging task demanding not only in-depth knowledge of the language but also profound skills in expressing complex scientific ideas in written form with due consideration of written language peculiarities at different levels – from text structure and content to grammar and register. The challenge is twice higher for academics, engaged in research, as international publication activity is part of their professional profile.

In 2014, addressing the current challenges, TPU piloted a professional language training course «Writing for Publication» [1] which is a joint course between the two universities – TPU and the University of Southampton, UK. The aim of the course was twofold. On the one hand, it was to help the participants develop the necessary scientific writing skills in English; on the other – to help them produce a ‘polished’ final draft of a scientific research article for publication.

Fourteen TPU content teachers and scientists were selected to participate in the course, meeting special requirements such as demonstrating language proficiency of upper B1 or B2 on the Common European Framework of Reference; having certain experience of scientific publishing, at least in Russian; and having a first draft, either in Russian or in English, of a future scientific research paper to be completed within the course.

In total, the course comprised 92 hours of face-to-face lectures and workshops delivered in 3 contextual modules. Module 1 «Structure, Content

and Style of Scientific Research Articles» was devoted to such common features of scientific writing as structural peculiarities of journal articles and lexical choice. Module 2 «Grammar Peculiarities of Writing Scientific Research Articles» was developed for 28 hours and focused on grammar accuracy of scientific English. The two modules were most of the time integrated in the learning process since language aspects are impossible to separate from text content and structure; however, to provide the participants with targeted training of specific grammar aspects of scientific written English, the course did include separate sessions on grammar. Module 3 «Coherence and Cohesion in Writing Scientific Research Articles» consisted of 34 hours and was aimed at developing the participants' skills of a complex analysis of scientific texts in terms of text integrity and coherence as well as teaching them to apply the proofreading technique.

Overall, the three modules were delivered in two parts. Part 1 covered Module 1 and Module 2. In this part of the course, a number of scientific research articles related to the participants' areas of research were used as learning materials. A variety of real examples helped to illustrate typical features of scientific style regardless of the topic of research. In addition, those texts were used to design special language exercises. After part 1, the participants had a period of self-directed study when they were to complete their research papers by incorporating the obtained knowledge and skills into their writing. The texts were further used in Part 2, which covered Module 3 of the course. In sessions, all participants' articles were discussed in detail, peer corrected, proofread and completed into the final drafts of articles ready for submission to international journals.

The major priority of the course was to individualise the studying as much as possible because writing is always an individual, personal activity. Moreover, writing, particularly scientific, varies enormously in different disciplines. For these reasons, each session focused on individual writing practice followed by individual mini tutorials with the instructor's feedback. Such approach gave the opportunity to have group discussion of the targeted learning points and then incorporate them into participants' writing depending on individual needs and research specifics. The tutorials provided feedback relevant to individual writing, which had special value for each participant.

On completion of the course, the participants formulated a clear understanding of the structure and organisation of scientific research articles in their discipline, became familiar with the language of those articles (grammar, lexis, functions) and had final drafts of their articles which were afterwards submitted for publication in international peer-reviewed scientific journals indexed by the leading databases Scopus and Web of Science.

In addition, the participants became aware of various strategies to apply for further professional development in scientific writing. Currently, four articles have been published, the rest ten need to be corrected in terms of research specifics, based on the results of blind review.

As a matter of conclusion, a course of 92 hours of lectures and workshops has obvious limitations – becoming a proficient academic writer in either a first or a second language is a process that, in most cases, is likely to take years. Hence, as discussed earlier, one of the objectives of the course was to familiarise the participants with a number of learning strategies that could be used in future to continue to develop their writing skills.

As a means of providing on-going support for the participants, an alternative approach would be for those working in the same or similar discipline areas to work in small groups to review each other's articles and discuss any issues that arise. These could then be shared with the wider group for further discussion and feedback.

Another approach might be to encourage analysis of the final draft of articles in comparison of the use of language with existing published articles in the discipline. This could work at all levels of analysis, from looking at the overall structure, through the inclusion and organisation of sections within the text, to paragraph and sentence level and even at the level of lexical choice.

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