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SOME CHALLENGES IN IDENTIFYING ACADEMIC LITERACY AMONG MASTER STUDENTS

Academic literacy is the ability to speak in a scientific environment and in discussions with constructive conclusions, be able to discuss, evaluate and compare scientific results, and make a significant contribution to the field of study. Academic literacy development is an urgent issue. The authors discovered a problem with a small number of domestic research on academic literacy. In addition, several issues with improving academic writing abilities among undergraduates are identified. The paper conducted an empirical investigation to measure undergraduates' academic literacy level. The questioning method was used to determine the causes of undergraduates' insufficient academic literacy. The survey included 51 Astana university master students. 52% of students can distinguish academic writing from other writing genres. According to the students, "the younger generation's low interest in studying scientific literature," "the incapacity of students to search: identify, select, and evaluate information," etc. – 3% of respondents, "satisfactory" – 37% – are the causes for the inadequate knowledge of academic writing. Based on the findings of the study, suggestions are made to focus on student motivation and the admission procedure for the magistracy.

Key words: level of academic literacy, master students, challenges, academic writing skills.

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Магистранттардың академиялық сауаттылығын анықтаудағы кейбір мәселелер

Академиялық сауаттылық – ғылыми ортада және пікірталастарда сындарлы тұжырымдар жасай білу, ғылыми нәтижелерді талқылау, бағалау және салыстыра білу, зерттеу саласына елеулі үлес қоса білу. Әдебиеттерге шолу жасау барысында авторлар академиялық сауаттылық тақырыбы бойынша отандық зерттеулердің жеткіліксіздігі мәселесін анықтады. Сонымен қатар, магистранттар арасында академиялық жазу дағдыларын дамытудың кейбір мәселелері анықталды. Мақалада магистранттардың академиялық сауаттылық деңгейін бағалау мақсатында эмпирикалық зерттеу жүргізілді. Магистранттардың академиялық сауаттылығының жеткіліксіздігі себептерін анықтау үшін сұрақ-жауап әдісі қолданылды. Сауалнамаға Астана қаласынан 51 магистрант қатысты. Академиялық жазуды басқа жазу стильдерінен 52% магистранттар ажыратады. Студенттердің пікірінше, академиялық жазу білімінің нашарлығының себептері: «өскелең ұрпақтың ғылыми әдебиеттерді оқуға құлшынысының төмендігі», «білім алушылардың іздену: ақпаратты табу, таңдау және бағалау қабілеттерінің төмендігі», т.б. Магистранттардың өзін-өзі бағалауы бойынша академиялық жазу дағдылары «жақсы» – 3%, «қанағаттанарлық» – 37% деп бағалаған. Зерттеу нәтижелері бойынша магистратураға қабылдау үдерісіне және студенттерді ынталандыруға назар аудару бойынша ұсыныстар тұжырымдалған.

Түйін сөздер: академиялық сауаттылық деңгейі, магистранттар, академиялық жазу мәселелері, академиялық жазу дағдылары.

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Некоторые проблемы по выявлению академической грамотности у магистрантов

Академическая грамотность – это способность выступить в научной среде и в дискуссиях с конструктивными выводами, уметь обсуждать, оценивать и сравнивать научные результаты, и делать значительный вклад в область исследования. Формирование академической грамотности

является актуальной проблемой современного образования XXI века. В ходе обзора литературы авторами было обнаружено малое количество отечественных исследований на тему академической грамотности. Кроме того, выявлены некоторые проблемы развития навыков академического письма у магистрантов. В статье проведено эмпирическое исследование по оценке уровня академической грамотности магистрантов. Применялся метод анкетирования для выявления причин недостаточной академической грамотности магистрантов. В опросе приняли участие 51 магистрант г.Астана. Отличают академическое письмо от других стилей письма 52% магистрантов. По мнению студентов причинами слабого владения академическим письмом являются следующие: «малый интерес подрастающего поколения к изучению научной литературы», «неумение учащихся осуществлять поиск: находить, отбирать и оценивать информацию», и др. Согласно самооценке магистрантов, академические навыки письма оценивают на «хорошо» – 3% респондентов, на «удовлетворительно» – 37%. Основываясь на результатах исследования сформулированы рекомендации обратить внимание на процесс приема в магистратуру и мотивации студентов.

Ключевые слова: уровень академической грамотности, магистранты, проблемы академического письма, навыки академического письма.

Introduction

At the present time, the number of those wishing to enroll in a master's degree has noticeably increased. With an increase in the number of students, the quality of writing academic writing does not improve. This follows from the fact that not every one of them understands that they will encounter academic writing during their studies. It is required when writing scientific articles, dissertations, reports. Academic writing is a complex process as well. There are no special classes on academic writing, so that students can familiarize themselves with the rules of writing and master the skills of writing. This leads to the fact that they cannot write correctly. The purpose of the article is to identify some challenges of the development of academic writing skills among master students. To achieve this goal, the following tasks are formulated:

- to clarify the general concept of academic writing;
- based on the analysis of the available scientific literature to identify (some problems with academic writing) the reasons for the development of academic writing skills;
- to identify the factors influencing the development of academic writing skills among master students of different specialties.

The article discusses the problems of developing academic writing skills among master students and ways to solve them. The main task of the study is to find out how students can be motivated to research activities, since research activities play a significant role in a student's education. It provides the basis for the formation of a complete scientific picture of the world. Academic writing helps to develop correct thinking so that a student can adequately respond to new and incomprehensible things.

Literature Review

According to the Law on Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, domestic science's quantitative and qualitative potential will be enhanced through the implementation of a unified system of constant reproduction of scientists starting at the school level, the continuous improvement of existing scientists' competence, their full integration into global scientific processes, and the unconditional commitment of the entire scientific community to the values of scientific ethics and academic honesty (Concept of science development of the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2022-2026, 2022) [1].

Oshima A., Hogue A. note that academic writing is the type of writing that is commonly utilized in high school and college classrooms. Academic writing differs from creative writing, which is what you do when you create tales (Oshima, 2007:3) [2]. However, R.Murray and S.Moore provide a more substantial definition. They believe academic writing is more serious than the topic taught in high school and college. It all starts with faulty, incomplete, and hazy hunches, notions, and thoughts. However, if you take use of its inherent 'revisability' it allows you to go full circle, to revisit ideas long after you originally thought of them, to examine the same things in other ways, to experiment, rewrite, repeat, and reconceptualize (Murray, 2006:5) [3].

Bak N. summarizes what makes writing "academic":

- Demonstrates comprehension;
- Is informed by academic literature and discussions on the issue (the literature will inform your interpretation of the concept, perception, description, explanations, and broader context);

- Provides an accurate explanation of the issue;
- Looks into the underlying assumptions and the historical evolution of the issue;

- Explains the problem by connecting the issue's reciprocal link to its larger context (Bak, 2003:3) [4].

Academic writing, which is used when writing scientific articles, dissertations, reports, is a special type of writing activity, the task of which is to convey in a clear and accurate form a scientific idea addressed to specialists in a particular field of research. This is due to its stylistic, grammatical and structural features. In addition, academic work is a complex creative process, the results of which are often subjected to critical analysis and rethinking. Therefore, it is very important to follow the rules of academic writing. Consequently, Reshmi P.T. considers that academic writing is defined as a higher level of writing ability. It is obvious that in order to study academic writing, one must have fundamental communication abilities. The prerequisites for studying academic writing are as follows: 1. Start free writing. 2. Reading and writing. 3. Develop research skills. 4. Think critically. 5. Learn the language of the specific area (Reshmi, 2019:5) [5]. Nowadays along with students, teachers of various disciplines are engaged in academic writing, who strive to overcome false pseudo-academic traditions. Academic writing is an integral part of the system of training specialists at universities and institutes. Each student or a teacher faces academic writing in one way or another: writing a dissertation, abstracts, articles, attending scientific conferences.

In order to keep a scientific style competently, students need to develop academic writing skills. Such skills include: critical thinking of the student, the ability to argue their ideas, the appropriate use of references and paraphrasing the other works, academic honesty, etc. According to Vyncke, postgraduate students have difficulties writing critically because they are inconsistent in how they present their ideas, lack background knowledge, and raise difficult questions about the subject (Vyncke, 2012) [6]. Higher education places a high importance on the incorporation of critical thinking in academic writing since it improves students' capacity to articulate their thoughts in a clear, correct, and acceptable manner (Moore, 2011:167) [7]. Also, in order to practice academic writing skills, it is necessary to know the description of the structure of a scientific article, the elements of which are: information about the authors, information about the article, keywords, abstract, introduction,

experimental part, results, discussion, conclusions, references to literature (Shulin, 2021:10) [8]. Consequently, Huber J. considers that the purpose of the argumentative paper is to persuade the reader that the claim is true based on the evidence presented. A research article should be targeted, focused on the subject of study, addressing a specific research question (Huber, 2018:10) [9]. The lack of these skills creates a problem. Since at the present stage of education development, graduates of higher educational institutions should have flexible professional thinking, the ability to deeply analyze the information received, be able to separate the true from the false. As a result, there is a need for the formation of a new educational environment, which is aimed at the development of critical thinking among students of higher educational institutions.

When conducting a literary review, we found that a relatively small number of domestic researchers were engaged in the study of academic writing. Among them we can single out the work of Orazbayeva F. "Actual problems of academic writing". According to the author, academic writing is aimed at coordinating the scientific form of written language communication. When studying academic writing, students' knowledge strives to achieve and assimilate new scientific indicators (Orazbayeva, 2022: 148) [10].

According to Mousavi H.S., Latift H. et.al., academic literacy also has a significant influence on how a person speaks and presents himself in a scholarly setting. The ability to successfully read, write, and think critically are talents that benefit a person not only in the classroom, but also in personal development. Positive experiences with academic literacy teach people not just how to improve their writing and other critical abilities, but also how to learn about themselves and become more confident in all they do in life (Mousavi, 2022:8)[11]. Plagiarism is the act of presenting someone else's ideas or work as your own, with or without that person's agreement, by integrating it into your work without giving it due credit, is known as plagiarism (Plagiarism, 2022) [12]. Unfortunately, according to the data of the National Center for Scientific and Technical Information of our country "Every 10th scientific work in the country is plagiarism" (Byqai, 2014) [13].

Methods of the study

The research is based on a comparative analysis of scientific papers. Content analysis procedures and

tools are also used. The analysis and generalization of modern research in the field of academic writing have identified the contextual and competence approach as a methodological basis for the development of academic writing skills as a means of forming universal competencies. The research methods are: survey, questionnaire, observation, analysis, literature review. The research is based on a critical analysis and systematization of foreign scientific, theoretical and methodological works in the field of academic writing.

Results

According to the analyses of scientists and in order to determine the level of academic literacy of master students in writing scientific articles, dissertations, we conducted a survey among students of the universities of Nur-Sultan. The survey could be completed by students at any convenient time from their gadgets and computers, since the survey

was conducted by sending out a Google form in an anonymous format according to the authors' questionnaire, which included 10 questions. In the end, 51 master students participated in the survey.

In the first question of the questionnaire, it was proposed to answer the question what is academic writing, in order to find out how knowledgeable master students are about academic writing. The absolute majority of respondents (66.7%) chose the answer that "Academic writing is a style of presentation of scientific papers. It represents the ability to express thoughts in scientific papers in a concise and accessible form." And 25.5% of respondents answered that the style is used for communication, informing in an official setting (the sphere of legislation, office work, administrative and legal activities). This style is used for registration of documents: laws, orders, resolutions, orders, specifications, protocols, receipts and certificates agree with the relevance of this problem (Figure 1).

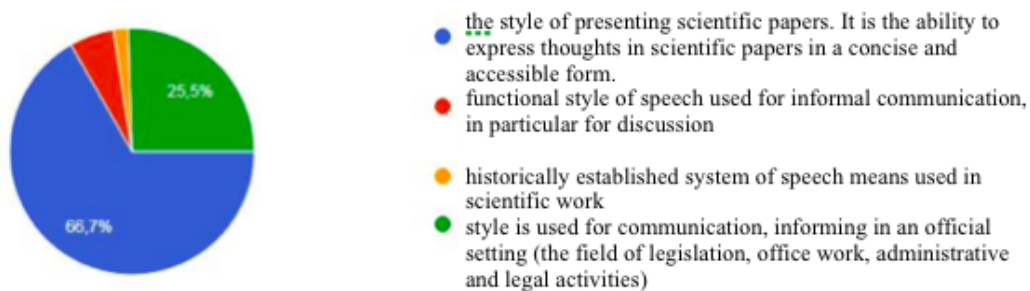


Figure 1 – Students' ideas about academic writing

The following answers were received to the question: "The difference between academic writing and other styles?". 52.9% of respondents noted the presence of certain requirements for the structure of the text and its design, 37.3% of respondents believe that academic writing is distinguished by the ability to argue and paraphrase, 29.4% noted stylistic features, namely logic, imagery and emotionality, and the remaining small part noted that it is characterized by abstract words with socio-political meaning (humanity, progress, nationality, publicity, peace-loving is 17.6% and 11.8% of students noted that extra-linguistic factors play an important role in this style of speech: facial expressions, gestures, the environment (Figure 2).

The purpose of the third question of the questionnaire was to determine how familiar students are with academic genres. According to students, the most common genre of academic writing (72.5%) was "dissertation", "scientific article" (70.6%) and "review" (49%). Only 27.5% chose the "monograph" (Figure 3).

The answers to the fourth question showed what relates to the structure of the scientific dissertation. Out of several answer options, many respondents chose "title page, conclusion, table of contents". The most minimal answer was "reports". According to the answers, it is clear that students know and possess information about the structure of a scientific dissertation (Figure 4).



Figure 2 – Differences between academic writing and other styles

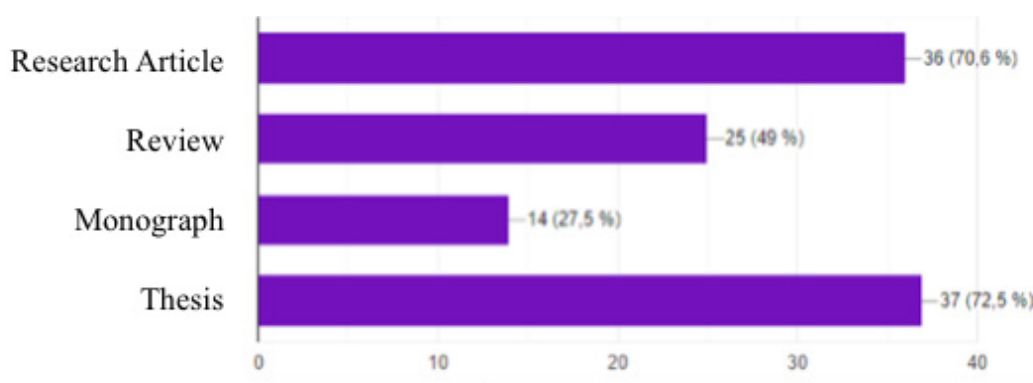


Figure 3 – Academic genres students know

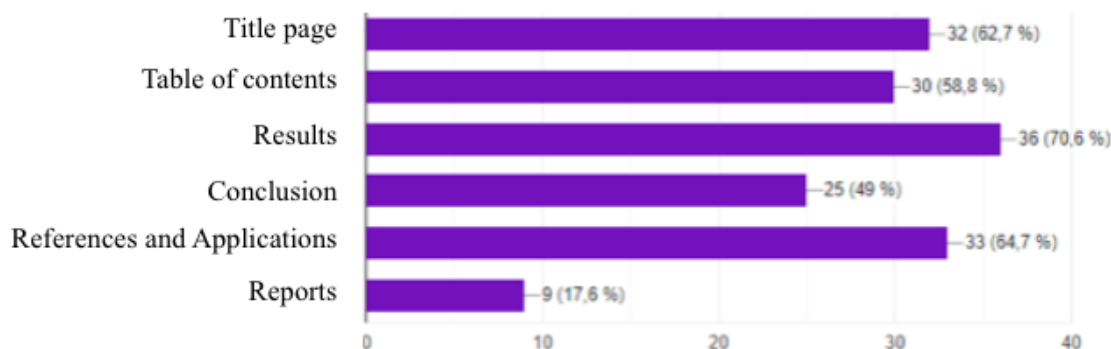


Figure 4 – Structure of a scientific dissertation

According to the answers to the first 4 questions, it became clear that master students have initial information about academic writing and are aware of its structure and generally know what a scientific paper is and how to write it. But for them it is difficult to write the main part of the dissertation. We found this out from the answers to question 5. And the main part is the framework of the dissertation and plays a major role. Since here students need to have critical thinking skills, as well as analyze a large amount of information and clearly show their own position. As a consequence

of this, we can say that most students lack logical and critical thinking (Figure 5).

The next question that interested us was the reasons why academic writing is not developing in our country. We wanted to identify the reasons, as the number of masters increases every year. And the quality of academic writing is not improving. The students mostly came to the conclusion that the reason is “the small interest of the younger generation in the study of scientific literature.” Some noted that the reason is “The inability of students to perform a search: to find, select and evaluate information” (Figure 6).

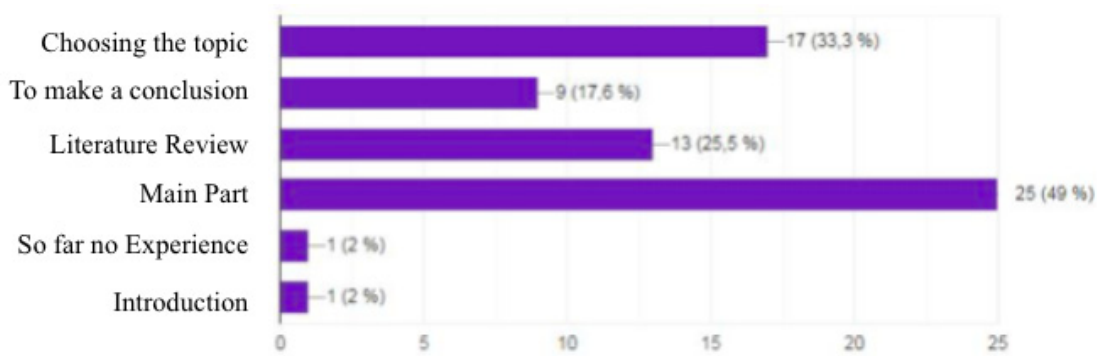


Figure 5 – Difficulties students face while writing a scientific work

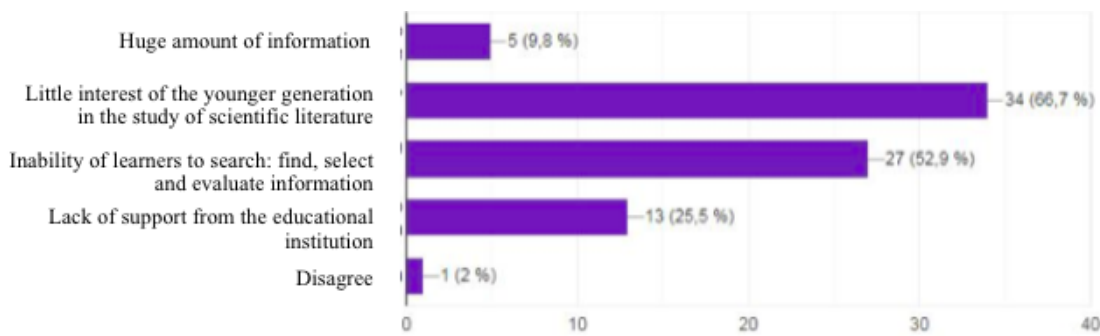


Figure 6 – The reasons why academic writing is not developing in our country

To the eighth question “What criteria should master students follow when writing an academic paper?” the students’ answers are shown in Figure 7. The majority of respondents chose the options

of having critical thinking (58.8%) and a clear statement of thoughts (56.9%). This shows that respondents are aware of what skills they lack (Figure 7).



Figure 7 – What criteria should masters follow when writing an academic letter?

In order to identify the true reason for the low level of academic literacy of masters, we tried to determine the goals of admission to the master’s program, we asked the following question: “What is the reason for your admission

to the master’s program?”. Many answers to the question showed that respondents enrolled in a master’s degree program for further career growth, exemption from military service, more career opportunities with a master’s degree, on

the advice of parents, an offer of an internship at a foreign university. This shows that students strive for more, and build a career with a master's degree, and climb the career ladder. As we can see, students do not try to develop academic skills, as they initially have other goals of studying for a master's degree. And to engage in scientific activity is not a priority for them,

and therefore the younger generation does not study scientific literature (Figure 8).

Of course, it was interesting to get acquainted with the answers of students to the last question of the questionnaire about how they would evaluate their knowledge and skills in academic writing. Of all respondents, 43.1% answered "good", 37.3% "satisfactory" (Figure 9).

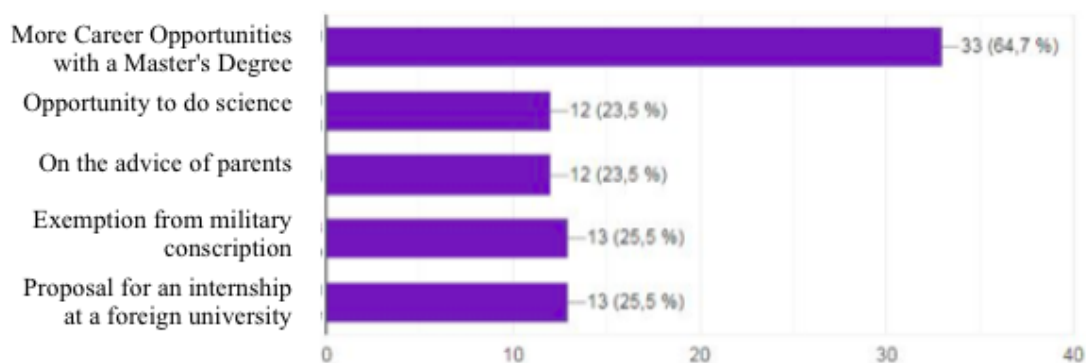


Figure 8 – Reasons for students to enter the Master's program

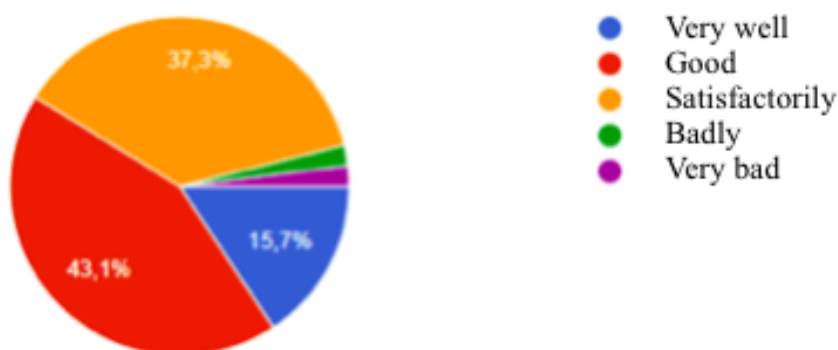


Figure 9 – How would you rate your knowledge and skills in academic writing?

But nevertheless, master students evaluate their knowledge and skills quite well, which surprised us very much. We believe that if we give them the right motivation, then students will show interest in scientific knowledge.

For example, for scientific articles that will be published, they will be encouraged in the form of supplements to the scholarship. Such methods of motivation can give a further impetus to their interest in academic writing. After all, we know that a large number of students work and they physically do not have enough time and energy to do science.

And if they are encouraged, they will be able to do more science, receiving an increased scholarship for this and not work during school hours. It is possible to hold various events more often, including conferences related to scientific research, since they are rarely held in many universities. Encourage more students to engage in scientific activities by opening additional circles or sections with a scientific direction. Many of the equipment is old, which scares students away and they need to be improved so that doing science is more interesting and undergraduates can use them when writing a dissertation. To

develop cooperation with other universities, including foreign universities.

Discussion

As we can see, the formation of academic writing in Kazakhstan is an important task that can be solved with the help of strong specialists who will have to cooperate with foreign scientists.

In general, this task needs to be approached in several stages, that is, personnel will be trained first, then various experiments will be conducted, the necessary programs and teaching materials will be developed. It is necessary for the programs to be effective, seriously scientific, theoretical and methodological research is needed. One of the most factors to improve students' academic literacy is higher education institutions positions and how they set priorities. Universities should be concerned not just with educational quality, but also "with gaining a competitive edge by providing a more academic environment for its students" (Atici, 2021:7) [14].

Despite the fact that every year the number of students willing to do science in our country increases, the quality of academic writing does not improve. This was demonstrated by the answers to the questionnaire. For example, many students believe that academic writing is only a dissertation, and they have no idea about other types such as reviews, essays, case studies, etc. And the other part of students do not know how to express their thoughts on the basis of paraphrasing and how to work with scientific sources, it follows that it is difficult for them to pass anti-plagiarism. During the examination of the dissertation and articles for uniqueness, most students cannot gain the required minimum threshold of uniqueness of the text – 70%. And this means that the problem of plagiarism is still relevant in our country. As a result, the following problems were identified:

- Lack of critical and analytical thinking;
- Low interest of students in scientific activity;
- Insufficient paraphrasing and quoting skills.

The most important reason for the lack of academic literacy of master students, as we found out as a result of the survey, is initial reason of entering the Master's degree. The main reason is the intention of future masters. At the very beginning of admission to the master's degree, applicants have various goals that in no way contribute to the development of science in a particular field of the chosen specialty. As applicants for a master's degree, they pursue different goals, such as a career,

avoiding military service, simply studying on the advice of their parents, etc. The lack of critical and analytical thinking in students negatively affects the motivation in academic writing. If a student does not know how to select the necessary material, find the main idea, evaluate the information, naturally, he loses interest in scientific activity. To get young people interested in academic writing, we offer some of our options. When enrolling students in the magistracy, careful selection should be carried out. We offer admission to the master's program in 3 stages.

The first step will be testing. Stage 2 – online interview. And the third stage is a direct meeting with the undergraduate in offline mode. Teachers will be able to immediately see the postgraduate student's interest in academic writing. That is, it is not easy to recruit the required number of undergraduates, namely those who are interested in science. Since many universities are simply trying to get the right number of students, forgetting about quality. It turns out that their goal is to use the entire allocated grant for undergraduates.

And at the interview there will be an opportunity to learn about the true purpose of admission of a master's student. Based on this, we want students to go through several stages for admission to the master's program, and not just testing. We also propose to add classes to the university's programs that will be aimed at teaching academic writing, writing articles, essays, dissertations and will meet international requirements. This will be done so that our students will not be inferior to students of Western universities when publishing their works in international publications and have equal opportunities with them.

Conclusion

Nowadays it is clear that academic writing is very necessary for higher education in our country, because without systematic training of students in academic writing, we will not be able to reach a new level either in writing scientific publications or in training highly qualified, as well as interested in science scientific personnel. Academic writing as a system that provides an opportunity to prepare future and current students step by step to interact with international scientific associations in their established language, we need today like air. The ability to write scientific texts is the main and important in relation to other research competencies. The practice of writing a

concrete, meaningful and convincing scientific text begins with the first student papers and never ends. In this article, we have analyzed the reasons why academic writing is not developing in our country. In order to improve the academic literacy of our students and undergraduates, it is recommended

to pay attention to the admission process to the master's degree, how motivated and interested the applicants are in science, in academic writing, in writing a dissertation. It is recommended to include academic writing subjects in the educational process.

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