First Experiences with Academic Writing: Challenges in Meeting Genre Requirements

Or

First Experiences with Academic Writing: Linguistic Difficulties

As of October 2012, one of the components of the psychometric exam is essay-writing. Because of this, many students make their first attempts at academic writing while preparing for the psychometric exam. Certain difficulties are evident in these initial attempts, as students try to adapt their writing to the linguistic requirements of the genre. These difficulties are manifested primarily in two areas.

Firstly, many students find it difficult to adapt their writing to the linguistic register appropriate for academic texts. One of the most obvious expressions of this is the large number of errors that occur because students are trying to adopt a more “sophisticated” linguistic style. Their essays include a great number of semantic and lexical errors unbefitting to the academic register. Secondly, many students find it difficult to accurately use conjunctions and to frame their discourse. They tend to embed conjunctions automatically, using a rigid format that is inappropriate for their specific text.

This presentation will be based on a comparison between fifty essays written by high school students and fifty essays by students preparing for the psychometric exam. An additional four thousand essays by students preparing for the psychometric exam were examined; some of the examples in this presentation are taken from those essays. I will first demonstrate that the essays written by students preparing for the psychometric exam are characterized by a higher number of errors of the two types presented above, in comparison to the essays written by high school students. Following this, I assess possible reasons why these errors are so frequent among students preparing for the psychometric exam. In conclusion, I offer practical ways to address these challenges.