

**Siepmann, Dirk / Gallagher, John D. / Hannay, Mike / Mackenzie, J. Lachlan: *Writing in English: A Guide for Advanced Learners.***

Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto, 2022, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition  
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Despite the multitude of printed and online materials such as style guides, textbooks and tutorials, academic writing still poses a major burden for many learners of English. To compose a text, authors must invest time and effort in gathering information, studying source material, organizing logical reasoning, using strategies to write up research results thoroughly and finally proof-reading and revising their texts before publication. This process is even harder when it comes to writing in a second language where the acquired language skills and L1 cultural writing traditions may negatively impact the writing process and its result. In their first two editions, the authors addressed such issues for German-speaking advanced English and American linguistics students. Now, after ten years since its second edition, the situation in the tertiary education sector has changed dramatically so adaptations to modern requirements were essential. English as a lingua franca has gradually altered the registers of native English. The further internationalisation of universities and colleges throughout Germany resulted in many more degree programmes in English, yet another factor spurring the need for a comprehensive review of a user-friendly reference book for academic writing.

*Writing in English* (526 pages) in its third edition draws upon the broad experience gained by its authors and the many changes in global academia. It is available both in printed and in an e-book format, which makes it more accessible for students. As Siepmann et al. point out in their extended Preface, they needed to add information regarding the globalization of higher education with English used in more degree programs worldwide, a wider international academic public and the changing demands of authors (cf. p. 9). The new edition therefore does in particular, but not exclusively, address the German-speaking audience, students and senior academics alike, but also native English professional writers and editors (cf. Preface, p. 10) to become more aware of potential traps in texts submitted by

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German-speaking authors. Moreover, the book is new in two respects (cf. Preface, p. 10): (i) “our advice is not based on any prescriptive notion of what constitutes a ‘good’ text.”; (ii) “we attempt to offer objective insights into those features of English academic text that may pose problems for the German-speaking writer of English”. All four modules derive their arguments from a thorough corpus-based comparison of authentic learners’ and native-speaker texts. This approach allows to describe major and minor deviations in the “students’ interlanguage” (cf. p. 11), which in particular can be tracked between the intermediate B2 and advanced C1 CEFR levels. The modular top-down structure of the book has remained and proved valuable: (i) Organizing ideas into text, (ii) Building effective sentences, (iii) Lexis and Grammar, and (iv) Style. The Introduction uses a sample student text to demonstrate how the features described in the four modules are intertwined in a text. Then Module 1 introduces the term paper as a fundamental science genre and one that students need to cope with first and throughout their entire degree program. Following the top-down model from genre to text to sentence level, grammar, lexis and style the reader is being familiarized with potential pitfalls and how to avoid these. Module 2 “Building effective sentences” covers sentence construction, a must-read section due to the different syntax in German and English. Module 3 is devoted to lexical and grammatical problems. Module 4 considers writing style in a broader sense but also focuses on what constitutes academic English. The four modules are self-contained so that advanced English users of the book may consider specific areas, for example concentrating their attention on idiomatic English or referring to specific grammar issues. The writing strategies recommended on page 23 of the Introduction help novice writers what to bear in mind when writing in English as L2:

- (i) Write in English from the start
- (ii) Think of your reader (German writers often rely on reader’s and not the writer’s responsibility for their text’s readability)
- (iii) Do your writing in stages
- (iv) Reread and rewrite
- (v) Revise

The authors know that working through such a massive book may be hard for students and they do their best to ensure comprehensibility. The text is written in clear and comprehensible English, which is primarily targeted at advanced speakers of English. Each module starts with a short introduction to give the readers guidance on what to expect, each chapter briefly describes the content and a summary or afterword concludes the subsections.

Moreover, information boxes summarize what has been dealt with and let the

readers reflect on the learned content. The authors add German linguistic terms where required to better familiarize the readers with the wording (e.g. section *-Abschnitt*, complex sentence – *zusammengesetzter Satz*). A glossary at the end explains linguistic terms. A reader-friendly layout using bold, italics and different font sizes eases reading and makes it more of an enjoyment. Thus both advanced and novice academic writers receive hands-on practice to enhance their understanding of more effective formulations and style. A subject index eases search and helps those who do not want to work from start to end but dive into specific features. In addition, the book also draws on advice presented in dictionaries and grammar books. The offered bonus material provided by the publisher online is of great value and a welcome add-on for working with individual chapters. Moreover, bibliographic references add value to individual chapters. Lecturers in their coursework, for example, can of course, supplement the presented multi-faceted material when it comes to subject-specific academic texts and style. Since the third edition is also available as an e-book, it offers plenty of didactic opportunities to work both in- and outside the classroom.

Although strong AI tools and algorithms, such as ChatGPT, are deemed to revolutionize traditional writing soon, they will not replace human writing crafting skills or their mindset when expressing scientific thoughts. This is why the book under review will remain a significant educational resource and a household book for all German-speaking authors who want to publish in English.

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