

“I feel so bad about making an excellent critical sentence”: Students' Voices through Photovoice in Academic Writing

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ABSTRACT

The academic writing challenges that students face have attracted the academics' interest in exploring deeper into the element that causes students' difficulties in composing academic writing using the academic writing difficulties approach. The goal of this study is to investigate academic writing challenges further. The researchers used the photovoice and qualitative research methods, with the exact procedure involved in the research process known as research design: briefing, photographing the objects or events, describing the objects or events, uploading the inspirational video and its question on social media, data gathering, classified, evaluating, and providing feedback, identifying and analysing some responses contextually and theoretically. The study's participants included students from various colleges and some social media users. The findings revealed five academic writing difficulties among 20 data samples: plagiarism, recognizing academic writing characteristics, combining ideas from various writing sources, lacking a distinct writing style, coherent writing, and linking theory to practice. The responses' most common academic writing challenge necessitates a unique writing style. It demonstrates that the participants need assistance with their writing style.

Keywords: Academic writing, difficulties, Indonesia, photovoice, university students

INTRODUCTION

English is a universal language because most countries use it as the primary language (Raja, Flora, Putrawan, & Razali, 2022; Tajeddin, Alaeib, & Moladoust, 2023). Because English has become a global language, learning it is crucial. English is widely used worldwide for communication. English is equally crucial for people who work in numerous branches of science,

technology, and politics (Tillayeva, 2020). Everyone in modern science and technology must be fluent in other world languages, especially English. Students are, therefore, expected to increase their English proficiency. Increasing one's knowledge and horizons are two benefits of learning English.

Additionally, using the application is made simpler by English proficiency. Brown (2007) defines four language skills in learning English that must be learned: speaking, writing, listening, and reading. Learning new words helps to support these four abilities. Their vocabulary enhances students' ability to speak, read, listen, and write.

Writing is expressing ideas, information, and opinions resulting from our mind's ideas, which we change into writing. Boczkowski and Delli Carpini (2020) defined that writing is a communication process that uses conventional systems to convey meaning to the receiver. Writing aims to express ideas and thoughts in written form to communicate. Writing gives opportunities to explore ideas. (Nunan, 2003). Writing is helpful for students to learn a language because writing provides many advantages, such as new words, new vocabulary, idioms, adventure in the language, and expressing new ideas about something. As a result, writing skills need to be enhanced.

Writing skills are more complex than other linguistic abilities. Even an English native speaker occasionally runs into difficulty in a precarious scenario. Fundamentally, writing skills demand a well-structured method of presenting ideas in an ordered and planned fashion (Braine & Yorozu, 1998). One of the fundamental needs for higher academic success and other tasks involving writing presentations is advanced writing ability (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2002). Students must also build sentences while considering grammatical coordination, proper lexis, and accurate spelling (Pylkkänen & McElree, 2006). This is arguably the most effective method of writing skill improvement. Academic writing skills, particularly at the school level writing, must be improved.

Academic writing is a form of language researchers use to outline the intellectual limits of their respective fields of study and areas of specialization. Academic writing is a complicated process that includes gathering, analyzing, evaluating data and planning, organizing, editing, and proofreading the work while reflecting on feedback. This process underpins written assessments at universities. In academic writing, we emphasize the fundamentals of academic writing to effectively express thoughts through suitable language, structure, and organization. Academic writing differs significantly from fictional prose in many ways in terms of style, aim, form, and the fundamental rules and expectations of textual composition. However, the best examples of academic writing by university students also demonstrate a high level of creativity and originality and persuasive and captivating writing.

The analysis of difficulties in writing academic writing has been

studied extensively. The way researchers examine this study's academic writing difficulties differs from past studies. In this research, the researchers analyzed academic writing difficulties using the theory of academic writing difficulties according to Phakiti and Li (2011), such as plagiarism, recognizing the characteristics of academic writing, combining ideas from various writing sources, lacking a distinctive writing style, and coherent writing and linking theory to practice. It includes a discussion of the results and contextual and theoretical interpretations. Researchers are interested in conducting this study since academic writing is the type of writing that is used most frequently today.

Learning is a conscious method related to the learned content, such as supporting greetings, grammar rules, and vocabulary (Tomlinson, 1998), in addition to prioritizing learning experiences, self-appreciation, emotional involvement, connected learning with thought power, communicative language use, and learning materials that foster learners' creativity. Tomlinson and Masuhara (2004) stated that language learning can use knowledge of language systems and the use of language, which includes institutions, instructors, learners, and spending. Besides that, learning English also has a strategy. Wenden (1987) defined learning strategies as flexible strategies that use processes, steps, plans, and routines for the learner to help with the acquisition, archiving, retrieval, and application of information. Language learning strategies are specific behaviours used by learners to assist learning to become more straightforward, exciting, independent, successful, and adaptive to the circumstances of the moment. Learning to write is inextricably linked to learning English.

Writing is an effort to express the writer's thinking and think critically. According to White and Arndt (1991), writing is thinking that has demands intellectual effort, and it involves generating ideas, planning, setting, monitoring, evaluating what is going to be written and what has been written, and using language for expressing exact meanings. Writing is one of the essential things to do because writing helps people think more critically and build new vocabulary and words. Writing is also a way to explore and develop ideas about interesting topics. Writing makes human thoughts visible, permits them to develop, be constrained, and adjust, and aids in triggering new ideas (Fulwiler, 2002).

Writing skills are specific abilities that help writers put their thoughts into words in a meaningful form and mentally interact with the message. Everyone can become a good writer if they know what must be considered in writing and what skills a writer must have and develop. A writer must have skills such as knowing excellent and correct grammar, thinking creatively, and editing. Writing effectively is seen as a cognitive challenge because it aids in evaluating linguistic proficiency, memory capacity, and reasoning ability. It calls for retrieving knowledge from long-term memory (Kellogg, Olive, & Piolat, 2007). Additionally, productive

writing necessitates a strong understanding of understandable subjects (Nickerson et al, 1985). Teachers should encourage their students to develop strong writing skills by guiding them on the writing process and writing rules, such as grammatical rules and writing exercises.

Academic Writing is communicating original findings with other scholars while adhering to rules (Akkaya & Aydin, 2018). Academic Writing is a type of Writing that is done with the aim of knowledge. It is usually for educational purposes. In short, academic Writing is the science of scientific Writing. Academic Writing has specific language features and purposes and a generic structure. There are many different sorts of academic Writing, including theses, articles, papers, projects, and posters. These types typically include composing a composition that details a research method. Since scientist publishes their research findings by writing multiple articles during their academic careers, academic articles are the most popular sort of academic Writing with their systematic approach (Deniz & Karagol, 2017). There are many different academic Writing styles, and it is considered a separate subject. This field includes various components, from title writing to bibliography and writing-related qualities, including language, expression, and shape.

Phakiti and Li (2011) stated that critical writing problems include issues of plagiarism, recognizing the characteristics of academic writing, combining ideas from various writing sources, lacking a distinctive writing style, and coherent writing and linking theory to practice.

a) Plagiarism

Plagiarism is appropriating another person's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit." This definition, the development of which is described below, clearly associates plagiarism with the misappropriation of intellectual contributions beyond specific words. It also extends the context of plagiarism beyond publication to the prior stages of proposing, performing, and reviewing research. Plagiarism has two components:

1) The taking of words, work, or ideas from a source.

2) The lack of acknowledgment of the source in the use of words, work, or ideas.

Plagiarism, in general, includes attributing somebody else's work to yourself without giving credit to the author, copying other's ideas or words without giving credit to the source, not putting quotations in quotation marks, giving the wrong information about a reference, changing the words while keeping the structure of a sentence from another source without acknowledging it, and copying a large number of words or ideas from other sources with or without due acknowledgment. In the study of Devlin and Gray (2007), 56 Australian University students were interviewed to investigate their views on the reasons for plagiarism in their school; and student's understanding of plagiarism, poor academic skills, teaching and learning factors, and some others were found to be the main reasons leading

the students to plagiarize in their institutions.

b) Recognizing the characteristics of academic writing.

Searching, discovering, evaluating, interpreting, and reconstructing information through mental processes is one of the most important characteristics of academic writing. An acceptable basic scholarly publication should be a 'first statement' that provides colleagues with sufficient information to help them evaluate observations, reproduce experiments, and evaluate intellectual manipulations (Akkaya & Aydin, 2018).

A formal tone, the use of the third person perspective rather than the first, a clear focus on the issue or topic rather than the author's opinion, and careful word choice are all traits of academic writing. Writing in the formal academic style abstains from using slang, jargon, and acronyms. Formal writing is what is used in academia. Many inexperienced writers find it challenging to distinguish between causal and formal writing. Writing in the first person or using "I" statements, making direct personal claims, and using imprecise word choices are all examples of informal writing styles.

c) Combining ideas from various writing sources.

A source is where the students gained the information they used in their work. Combining sources refers to the expectation that students would complete tasks by locating diverse sources and fusing them to create something intriguing. It is crucial to strike the correct balance between words and ideas and those of other authors. Including other sources or "voices" in their writing can be challenging for many pupils. Combining sources seeks to back up the statements, arguments, and thoughts. To get it properly, there must be harmony between the ideas and language expressed in the author's voice and that of another writer.

The amount of opinions that must be included in a written assignment relies on various variables, including the level of study (undergraduate or graduate), the subject or topic being written about, and the intended writing style, such as essay, report, and review. It is essential to write in the author's voice, meaning that more than half of what the authors write should be their opinions. The writing should be primarily written in the author's voice. Although it should be present throughout part of the work, the voice should be more robust in the introduction and end when writing an argument-based essay. In the body of the writing, other voices may typically dominate in offering arguments supporting the ideas, but the voice should also be present simultaneously to manage it.

d) Lacking a distinctive writing style.

Writing can help learners become stronger by introducing additional grammar rules, idioms, and vocabulary, which Mahalingam & Md. Yunus (2016) and Ang, Embi, and Yunus (2017) cite language acquisition as crucial

components. Asmuti (2002) asserts that understanding the craft of writing enables writers to develop their thoughts in a methodical order. Writers should consider how readers will understand their ideas before beginning a piece. For the reader to comprehend the writer's ideas, the writer must utilize the proper written language.

Bryne (1988) categorizes the issues that make writing challenging into three groups. The linguistic difficulty comes first. Grammar, vocabulary, language use, and sentence construction must all be closely monitored when writing. The second, Physiology Difficulty, focuses on how difficult it is for writers to receive feedback and direct involvement from readers while writing. This challenge primarily focuses on developing textual material or compositional content. The third is the mental challenge. Writing must follow formal capitalization, grammar, spelling, and paragraphing guidelines.

e) Coherent writing and linking theory to practice.

The association of ideas at the idea level is referred to as coherent. Coherent is a term used to describe the "rhetorical" elements of writing, such as organizing and elaborating ideas, synthesizing and integrating readings, and developing and supporting arguments (such as developing thesis statements). Hyland (2006) emphasized that a text's coherence determines how readers will understand it, given the significance and applicability of its meaning, ideas, and theoretical configuration.

METHOD

This research uses the photovoice method to analyze the difficulties in academic writing. According to Wang and Burris (1997), through the use of a particular photographic approach, people can identify with, represent, and improve their communities through the process of photovoice. It gives people access to cameras to serve as recorders and possible change agents in their communities. It uses the visual image's immediacy to provide proof and encourage an efficient, interactive method of exchanging knowledge and skills.

Three main objectives of photovoice are: (1) to enable people to reflect and record the strengths and concerns of their community, (2) to foster critical discussion and knowledge about significant community issues through both large and small group discussions of photographs, and (3) influence policymakers (Wang & Burris, 1997). People can utilize photovoice as a participatory research tool that aligns with these objectives. Photovoice is adaptable and may be tailored to specific participatory goals, various groups and communities, and diverse academic writing difficulties. The initial objective of using photovoice to carry out participatory needs assessment is highlighted in this research by the researchers, who also outline the concept and method used to achieve it.

Besides using the photovoice method, the researchers also applied qualitative methods in this research. Qualitative research is multi-method oriented and includes an interpretive and naturalistic approach to its subject. It means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural environment and try to

understand and interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning that people give them. It includes careful use and collection of case studies, personal experiences, introspection, life stories, problematic moments, and meaning in an individual's life (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

In collecting data, the researchers have done briefing, photographing the objects or events, describing them, uploading the inspirational video and its question on social media, data gathering, classifying, evaluating, and giving feedback, and identifying and analyzing some responses contextually and theoretically. The researcher applied the photovoice research method with the theory of academic writing difficulties, according to Phakiti and Li (2011), as a detailed elaboration. The research subject was the responses to the photovoice project. The data in the appendices are intended to assist readers in understanding how this study is conducted.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Academic writing is a type of writing done with the aim of knowledge. It is usually for educational purposes. In short academic writing is the science of scientific writing. Academic writing has specific language features and purposes and has a generic structure.

Table. Students' academic writing difficulties

No	Academic Writing Difficulties	Number	Percentage (%)
1	Plagiarism	2	10
2	Recognizing the characteristics of academic writing	5	25
3	Combining ideas from various writing sources	2	10
4	Lacking a distinctive writing style	9	45
5	Coherent writing and linking theory to practice	2	10
Total		20	100

Table 2. Students' academic writing difficulties and their responses

Academic writing difficulties	Participants' Responses
Plagiarism	"When writing, I often face difficulties to avoid plagiarism. Even after I tried paraphrasing, plagiarism, I cannot avoid it". (Malika)
Recognizing the characteristics of academic writing	"...for academic writing, I often have difficulties with the writing rules". (Adinda) "Academics require a complicated structure that we need to know, even I find myself struggling just to decide what topic I should write". (Annisa)
	"I found out that I did not follow the rules, so I had a hard time" (Jessica)
	"Most frequent difficulty is getting confused to start. I am confused about where to start writing". (Yasmin)
	"Yes, I once wrote an article to fulfill my course assignment last semester, at that time I found it very difficult because I did not know the rules in academic writing". (Safha)
	"In making this work, I had difficulty in make determining the topic, outline, and finishing touch. but the hardest part I did was when determining the topic that I would discuss, and also the outline. It was very difficult to come up with an idea. then outline, in writing I rarely outline first, usually, I just write it right away, that's what makes my writing very messy". (Putri)
Combining ideas from various writing sources.	"Yes, I'm having trouble generating ideas or elaborating on them, if I have an idea it is difficult to develop and organize the idea". (Faiza)
	"I find it difficult to write and elaborate my thoughts". (Dinda)
Lacking a distinctive writing style.	"Sometimes I do not know how to start to write and I feel so bad about making a good critical sentence". (Meiva)
	"I have trouble in writing. Like when looking for the right vocabulary to write". (Nisa)
	"Yes of course I have. I have written an article to fulfill my coursework. Here I work with my friend. Of course, we find it difficult to write this. But to be honest, writing is not as easy as I thought. Sometimes I have difficulty in some words or structure in writing". (Vania)
	"I once wrote an article with my friend. We created this article intending to fulfill a course assignment. To be honest, we had a lot of trouble and it took us a long time to finish this article. One of the difficulties we encounter is how to write with a good structure". (Angel)

1. Plagiarism

The percentage for social motivation is 10%. The factors affecting why the respondents plagiarize, it is seen that the stated factors are generally problems with using a foreign language, time constraints, lack of knowledge about plagiarism, overloaded course requirements, the difficulty of the assignment, lack of understanding of the assignment, lack of enough academic skills, and others. Some factors affecting student attitudes toward plagiarism are ignorance, lack of personal investment in their education, situational ethics, and lack of consistent styles among and within various disciplines.

The following are the most significant causes of student plagiarism (Howard, 2002):

1) A true ignorance of the subject. Some students mistakenly plagiarize because they are unfamiliar with the necessary techniques for quoting, paraphrasing, citing, and referring, or because they are unsure of what is meant by "common knowledge" and the phrase "in their own words."

- 2) Increased effectiveness. To improve their grade and save time, students plagiarize.
- 3) Managing time. The demands on students' time are numerous, including peer pressure to have an active social life, dedication to college sports and performing activities, obligations to one's family, and the need to finish numerous tasks within a short period.
- 4) Individual attitudes and values. Some students perceive no justification for refraining from or engaging in plagiarism due to.
- 5) For some students, plagiarism is a tangible way of showing dissent and expressing a lack of respect for authority. They may also regard the task set as neither important nor challenging.
- 6) Students' attitudes towards teachers and class. Some students cheat because they have negative student attitudes towards assignments and tasks that teachers think have meaning but they don't.

2. Recognizing the characteristics of academic writing

The amount for recognizing the characteristics of academic writing is 25%. A lack of understanding of academic writing itself may result in this problem or circumstance. English academic writing is linear, meaning it has one primary idea or theme and each paragraph supports it, without straying or restating what has already been mentioned. The goal is to inform rather than to amuse. Additionally, it is written in the language's accepted standard form. Academic writing has 10 key components that are frequently discussed. Academic writing can be formal, complex, objective, explicit, guarded, and accountable to some extent. It uses clear, truthful terminology. It is also planned and organized effectively

3. Combining ideas from various writing sources.

The percentage for combining ideas from various writing sources is 10%. The respondents think that it is difficult to develop and organize the ideas. There are two primary ways to include material from other authors or ideas in your work: direct quotes (using their exact words) and indirect reporting such as paraphrases and summaries. Additionally, the following are some ideas for keeping a firm and authoritative voice over extended assignments:

- 1) Maintain the first paragraph of every paragraph with your voice. Even if another writer dominates the rest of the paragraph, don't give away this "great place."
- 2) Include transitional paragraphs that are written in your voice and in which you reaffirm your thesis and preview the next section.
- 3) A "catalogue" approach, where you list other people's opinions on your subject, should be avoided. It is preferable to rapidly summarize their points of view before moving on to your own opinions.

4. Lacking a distinctive writing style.

Lacking a distinctive writing style is the option that respondents chose most frequently (45%). The respondents think that writing with a good structure and making the sentence or paragraphs organized are hard things to do when writing academic writing. Heaton (1975), several abilities are required for successful writing and can be categorized into five main regions or general components.

- 1) Language use: the capacity to construct coherent phrases
- 2) Mechanical aptitude: the capacity to accurately apply linguistic standards specific to writing, such as punctuation and spelling
- 3) Content treatment: the capacity to generate ideas and think creatively while eliminating all superfluous material
- 4) Stylistic abilities: the capacity to properly employ words and manipulate phrases and paragraphs
- 5) Decision-making abilities: the capacity to choose, arrange, and prioritize pertinent information as well as the ability to write appropriately for a certain purpose and audience.

5. Coherent writing and linking theory to practice.

The percentage for coherent writing and linking theory to practice is 10 %. The respondents believe that maintaining a connection between each paragraph and having a fit with the theory they utilize is highly challenging. To enhance the reader's comprehension, each sentence in a paragraph needs to be logically organized by adhering to a continuous sequence based on the meaning it is trying to express, according to Hinkel (2004). Writing within this paradigm entails conveying ideas in a clear manner that is consistent and understandable.

The main objective of theory-to-practice integration is to assist students in producing reliable and understandable written works by utilizing their understanding of key reading strategies. The understanding that writing abilities allow the learner to concentrate on their attention to grammatical elements is the second reason for identifying connections between theory and practice.

CONCLUSION

The hardest subject to talk about is academic writing issues. By employing the photovoice approach to study the issues with academic writing, a new perspective on what factors contribute to people finding it difficult to write has emerged. By better comprehending the elements that affect academic writing abilities, people can also gain from being aware of the challenges associated with academic writing. Phakiti and Li (2011) categorized academic writing difficulties into several categories, including issues of plagiarism, recognizing the characteristics of academic writing, combining ideas from various writing sources, lacking a distinctive writing style, and coherent writing and linking theory to spractice. All of the

academic writing difficulties mentioned above are present in the respondents' reasons why it is difficult to write academic writing.

The most distinguishing feature of respondents' writing academic writing issues is the lacking a distinctive writing style. Some divide the difficulties in writing that have an impact on the writing style into three categories. The first is linguistic complexity. When writing, it's important to pay special attention to sentence design, vocabulary, grammar, and language use. The second obstacle, Physiology Difficulty, is mostly concerned with the difficulty of producing textual material or compositional substance. Lastly, there is the mental difficulty. Capitalization, grammar, spelling, and paragraphing are just a few examples of the formal rules that must be followed when writing.

There are some ways to overcome the difficulties in writing academic writing as follows:

1. Be concise, avoid wasting words, and use as few words as possible.
2. Organize the paper, and outline first.
3. Avoid contractions, idioms, and colloquial expressions, it is not formal writing.
4. Varies the sentence structure such as simple sentence, compound sentence, complex sentence, and compound-complex sentence.
5. Use the active voice, it gives more clarity.
6. Avoid repetition, use different transition words and use precise language.
7. Proofread the writing, and read backwards the writing.

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