

Teaching Academic Writing for Publication in ELT: Bridging Students' Classroom Writing to Scholarly Journal Publication

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ABSTRACT

Academic writing has become an essential skill for university students, particularly in English Language Teaching (ELT), where publication in international journals is increasingly required. However, many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students face significant challenges in transforming classroom writing into publishable academic articles. This study aims to explore the gap between classroom-based academic writing and publication-oriented writing and to propose an instructional framework to address this issue. This research employed a qualitative descriptive design involving students and lecturers in an ELT program. Data were collected through document analysis, classroom observation, and semi-structured interviews. The findings reveal that students encounter difficulties in linguistic accuracy, rhetorical organization, and understanding academic genre conventions. Additionally, traditional English for Academic Purposes (EAP) instruction is insufficient to prepare students for publication demands. The study proposes a publication-oriented academic writing model integrating genre-based instruction, process writing, and English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP). The study concludes that academic writing instruction should shift from assignment-oriented practices to publication-oriented pedagogy to enhance students' scholarly communication skills.



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INTRODUCTIONS

Academic writing has long been recognized as a fundamental component of higher education, particularly within the field of English Language Teaching (ELT). According to Ken Hyland (2021), academic writing is not merely a linguistic activity but a social and rhetorical practice that enables individuals to participate in disciplinary communities. This perspective aligns with the concept of academic literacies, which views writing as a meaning-making process shaped by institutional contexts and power relations. In recent decades, the role of academic writing has evolved significantly, moving beyond its traditional function as a classroom-based activity into a critical tool for scholarly communication and knowledge dissemination.

In the global academic landscape, English has become the dominant language of publication, placing additional demands on students in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Theresa Lillis and Mary Jane Curry (2021) argue that multilingual scholars often

face structural and linguistic inequalities in accessing international publication platforms. This condition requires EFL students not only to master linguistic competence but also to understand disciplinary conventions, rhetorical strategies, and audience expectations in academic discourse.

The increasing emphasis on publication, often referred to as “publish or perish,” has significantly influenced higher education worldwide. As highlighted by John Swales and Christine Feak (2022), writing for publication involves mastering specific genre conventions, particularly the IMRaD (Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion) structure. However, many students remain underprepared for these demands, as academic writing instruction often focuses primarily on general essay writing rather than research-based writing.

One of the central theoretical frameworks relevant to this study is the genre-based approach. According to Christine Tardy (2020), genre-based pedagogy helps learners understand how texts are structured and how language is used to achieve communicative purposes in specific contexts. This approach emphasizes explicit instruction of rhetorical moves, which is crucial for academic writing intended for publication. In addition, the process writing theory, introduced by Linda Flower and John Hayes, highlights writing as a recursive process involving planning, drafting, revising, and editing. This theory supports the idea that writing development requires continuous feedback and revision rather than one-time product evaluation.

Furthermore, the concept of English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP) has gained increasing attention as an extension of English for Academic Purposes (EAP). John Flowerdew and Pejman Habibie (2023) emphasize that ERPP focuses specifically on preparing students and novice researchers for the demands of academic publishing, including responding to reviewers, selecting journals, and positioning research contributions. This framework is particularly relevant to this study, which seeks to bridge classroom writing and publication practices.

Several previous studies have investigated challenges in academic writing among EFL students. For instance, Ute Wingate (2020) found that students often struggle with integrating critical thinking and argumentation into their writing due to limited exposure to disciplinary discourse. Similarly, Yuan Zhai and Azizah Razali (2023) demonstrated that genre-based instruction significantly improves students’ ability to organize academic texts and meet rhetorical expectations.

In another study, Lili Wang and Siew Kew (2025) explored the use of blended learning in academic writing instruction and found that integrating digital tools with traditional instruction enhances students’ engagement and writing performance. Meanwhile, James Corcoran (2022) highlighted that novice writers often face difficulties in understanding the publication process, including peer review and journal selection, which limits their participation in academic publishing.

Although these studies provide valuable insights into academic writing challenges and pedagogical approaches, most of them focus either on classroom-based writing development or isolated instructional interventions. There is still limited research that explicitly examines the transition from classroom writing to publication-oriented writing, particularly in ELT contexts. This gap indicates the need for a more integrated instructional framework that combines linguistic, rhetorical, and publication-related competencies.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the gap between classroom-based academic writing and publication-oriented writing among EFL students. By drawing on genre-based

pedagogy, process writing theory, and ERPP, this research seeks to propose a comprehensive instructional model that better prepares students for academic publishing. Unlike previous studies, this research not only identifies students' challenges but also offers a pedagogical solution that integrates multiple theoretical perspectives into a publication-oriented academic writing framework.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to both theory and practice. Theoretically, it extends the application of genre-based and ERPP frameworks in ELT contexts. Practically, it provides insights for educators to redesign academic writing instruction to better align with the demands of scholarly publication. Ultimately, this study emphasizes that academic writing should not be viewed merely as a classroom requirement but as a critical skill for engaging in global academic discourse.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach aimed at gaining a comprehensive understanding of students' academic writing experiences and the instructional practices that influence them. Qualitative research is particularly suitable for this study because it allows for an in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives and the contextual factors that shape their writing development.

This research adopts a qualitative descriptive design, focusing on analyzing naturally occurring data from classroom settings. This design enables the researcher to examine how academic writing is taught and practiced, as well as to identify challenges faced by students in real learning environments.

The participants of this study consist of undergraduate students enrolled in an academic writing course within an ELT program, as well as lecturers who teach the course. The students represent novice academic writers who are in the process of developing their writing skills, while the lecturers provide insights into instructional strategies and challenges.

Several instruments were used to collect data in this study. First, document analysis was conducted on students' writing samples, including essays and research drafts. This analysis aimed to identify common patterns of errors and areas of difficulty. Second, classroom observations were carried out to examine teaching methods and student engagement. Third, semi-structured interviews were conducted with both students and lecturers to gather detailed information about their experiences and perceptions.

The data collected were analyzed using thematic analysis. This process involved coding the data, identifying recurring themes, and interpreting the findings in relation to the research questions. The analysis focused on uncovering key challenges in academic writing and evaluating the effectiveness of current instructional practices.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive overview of the multifaceted challenges faced by EFL students in developing academic writing skills for publication. These challenges are not limited to linguistic competence but extend to rhetorical awareness, cognitive processes, and affective factors that influence writing performance.

1. Linguistic Challenges

One of the most prominent issues identified in this study is students' limited linguistic competence. Analysis of students' writing samples reveals frequent grammatical errors, including incorrect tense usage, subject-verb agreement, and inappropriate word choice. Additionally, students often rely on simple sentence structures, which limits their ability to express complex ideas effectively.

Another linguistic issue relates to cohesion and coherence. Many students struggle to connect ideas logically within and across paragraphs. Transitional devices are either overused or underused, resulting in disjointed writing. This lack of cohesion significantly affects the readability and academic quality of their texts.

Moreover, students demonstrate limited academic vocabulary. They tend to use informal or conversational expressions, which are not appropriate in academic writing. The inability to use discipline-specific terminology further weakens the credibility of their work.

2. Rhetorical and Structural Challenges

Beyond linguistic difficulties, students encounter substantial challenges in organizing their writing according to academic conventions. Many students lack a clear understanding of the IMRaD structure commonly used in research articles. For instance, introductions often fail to establish a clear research gap, while discussions tend to summarize results rather than interpret them critically.

Students also struggle with argumentation. Instead of presenting a well-developed argument supported by evidence, they often provide descriptive information without critical analysis. This indicates a limited understanding of the purpose of academic writing as a means of constructing and communicating knowledge.

Furthermore, students have difficulty maintaining a consistent academic tone. Their writing sometimes shifts between formal and informal styles, which reduces its professionalism. The misuse of personal pronouns and lack of hedging strategies further highlight their limited rhetorical awareness.

3. Genre Awareness and Publication Knowledge

Another key finding is students' lack of familiarity with genre conventions and publication requirements. Most students are unaware of the specific expectations of academic journals, such as formatting guidelines, citation styles, and peer review processes.

Students also show limited ability to engage with existing literature. Literature reviews are often superficial, lacking synthesis and critical evaluation. Instead of positioning their research within the broader academic context, students tend to list previous studies without demonstrating their relevance.

This lack of genre awareness reflects the limitations of traditional academic writing instruction, which often does not expose students to authentic research articles or real publication practices.

4. Psychological and Affective Factors

The study also reveals that psychological factors play a significant role in students' writing performance. Many students report experiencing anxiety when asked to write academic texts, particularly those intended for publication. This anxiety is often linked to fear of making mistakes and being judged negatively.

Low self-confidence is another common issue. Students often doubt their ability to produce high-quality writing, which leads to avoidance behaviours such as procrastination. In some cases, students express a belief that academic publishing is only for experts, which discourages them from attempting to submit their work.

Motivation is also a critical factor. While some students are motivated by the prospect of publication, others view academic writing as a burdensome requirement rather than an opportunity for intellectual growth.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the complex nature of academic writing in EFL contexts and underscore the need for a more comprehensive instructional approach. The challenges identified linguistic, rhetorical, and psychological are interconnected and require integrated solutions.

From a linguistic perspective, the results confirm that language proficiency remains a fundamental barrier for EFL students. However, improving grammar and vocabulary alone is not sufficient. Students must also develop the ability to use language strategically to achieve specific communicative purposes. This aligns with the concept of academic literacies, which views writing as a social practice rather than merely a technical skill.

The rhetorical challenges identified in this study suggest that students need explicit instruction in academic genres. The genre-based approach provides a useful framework for teaching students how to structure their writing and meet the expectations of academic discourse communities. By analyzing model texts and practicing genre-specific writing, students can develop a deeper understanding of how academic arguments are constructed.

The lack of genre awareness and publication knowledge highlights the importance of integrating English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP) into the curriculum. ERPP goes beyond traditional EAP by focusing on the specific skills required for academic publishing. This includes understanding the peer review process, responding to reviewers' comments, and selecting appropriate journals.

The psychological factors identified in this study also have important implications for teaching. Writing anxiety and low self-confidence can significantly hinder students' progress. Therefore, instructors should create a supportive learning environment that encourages risk-taking and provides constructive feedback. Peer collaboration and formative assessment can help reduce anxiety and build confidence.

Based on these findings, this study proposes a publication-oriented instructional model that integrates multiple pedagogical approaches. First, genre-based instruction should be used to teach the structure and conventions of academic writing. Second, process-oriented writing should be emphasized to allow students to develop their writing through multiple drafts and revisions. Third, ERPP should be incorporated to familiarize students with publication practices.

In addition, technology can play a role in supporting academic writing. Tools such as grammar checkers and reference management software can help students improve their writing efficiency. However, these tools should be used as supplements rather than substitutes for instruction.

Another important aspect is the development of students' authorial identity. Students need to see themselves as contributors to academic knowledge rather than passive learners. This shift in perspective can increase their motivation and engagement with writing.

Finally, the findings suggest that curriculum design should be aligned with the goal of preparing students for publication. This may involve redesigning academic writing courses to include authentic tasks, such as writing for real audiences and submitting work to journals or conferences.

CONCLUSION

This study provides an in-depth analysis of the challenges faced by EFL students in academic writing for publication and offers insights into how these challenges can be addressed through effective instructional practices. The findings demonstrate that academic writing is a complex skill that involves not only linguistic competence but also rhetorical awareness, genre knowledge, and psychological readiness. One of the key conclusions of this study is that there is a significant gap between classroom-based academic writing and publication-oriented writing. Traditional academic writing instruction, which focuses primarily on grammar and essay writing, does not adequately prepare students for the demands of scholarly communication. As a result, students struggle to meet the expectations of academic journals and often lack confidence in their ability to publish their work. The study also highlights the importance of adopting a holistic approach to teaching academic writing. Linguistic accuracy, while essential, must be complemented by instruction in rhetorical strategies and genre conventions. Students need to understand not only how to write correctly but also how to write effectively for specific academic purposes. Another important conclusion is the role of psychological factors in academic writing. Writing anxiety, low self-confidence, and lack of motivation can significantly hinder students' progress. Therefore, it is crucial for instructors to create a supportive learning environment that encourages students to take risks and view writing as a process of learning and development. The proposed publication-oriented instructional model offers a practical solution to these challenges. By integrating genre-based instruction, process writing, and ERPP, this model provides a comprehensive framework for developing students' academic writing skills. It emphasizes the importance of iterative writing, feedback, and real-world application, which are essential for preparing students for academic publishing. Furthermore, this study underscores the need for curriculum reform in ELT programs. Academic writing courses should be designed not only to meet classroom objectives but also to prepare students for participation in the global academic community. This requires a shift from product-oriented assessment to process-oriented learning and from isolated writing tasks to authentic, meaningful writing experiences. In conclusion, improving academic writing instruction in EFL contexts is essential for enabling students to succeed in an increasingly competitive academic environment. By addressing the linguistic, rhetorical, and psychological challenges identified in this study, educators can help students develop the skills and confidence needed to become successful academic writers. Ultimately, this will contribute to the advancement of knowledge and the inclusion of diverse voices in global academic discourse.

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