STUDENT CHALLENGES IN ACADEMIC PARAGRAPH WRITING: A STUDY IN ACEH, INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the common writing challenges faced by students when composing academic paragraphs. Focusing on key areas including content development, vocabulary usage, language fluency, mechanical accuracy (grammar, punctuation), and organizational structure, the study aims to identify specific writing difficulties. A quantitative approach was employed, utilizing questionnaire to gather data from 35 students at English Education department in Aceh, Indonesia. Key findings revealed that content development posed the most significant challenge, reported by 65% of participants. Vocabulary usage followed closely at 60%, while language fluency presented difficulties for 50% of students. Mechanical accuracy and organizational structure each presented challenges for 45% of participants. These findings underscore the critical need for targeted support to address specific areas of writing difficulty, particularly in content development and vocabulary usage, to enhance students' academic writing proficiency.

KEYWORDS: *Academic Writing, English Writing, Student Challenges*.

INTRODUCTION

Academic writing is a critical skill that students need to master in order to succeed in higher education and professional environments (Fhonna & Ismail, 2022; Fitria et al., 2023; Hyland, 2013). The ability to write coherent, well-structured academic paragraphs is essential for effectively communicating ideas, presenting arguments, and demonstrating mastery of subject matter (Netta et al., 2024). The importance of academic writing extends beyond the classroom as it plays a crucial role in students' ability to engage in research, produce scholarly articles, and contribute meaningfully to academic discourse (Sarair et al., 2024). Therefore, understanding and improving students' academic writing skills is a key focus for educators worldwide.

However, many students face significant obstacles when writing academic paragraphs (Ananda et al., 2021; Farsia & Sarair, 2023; Fhonna & Ismail, 2022; Helmanda et al., 2022;

Rusmiati et al., 2023). These challenges include issues such as organizing ideas logically, developing strong thesis statements, and maintaining coherence and cohesion throughout their writing (Ananda et al., 2021; Farsia & Sarair, 2023). Moreover, the complexities of grammar, vocabulary, and style often pose additional barriers to students' ability to express their ideas clearly and persuasively (Fhonna & Ismail, 2022; Helmanda et al., 2022). Such difficulties are particularly pronounced in non-native English-speaking contexts, where students may struggle with language proficiency in addition to writing skills (Rusmiati et al., 2023). These challenges not only hinder students' academic success, but also affect their confidence and motivation to write.

J.B. Heaton's (1990) rubric for assessing writing provides valuable insights into the various dimensions of academic writing that need attention. Heaton's framework emphasizes key areas such as content, organization, vocabulary, and language use. By using such rubrics, educators can identify specific weaknesses in students' writing and provide targeted feedback to help them improve. However, before such improvements can be made, it is crucial for teachers to first understand the underlying causes of students' writing difficulties. This knowledge allows teachers to adjust their instruction and provide the necessary support to address individual challenges. Thus, assessing students' writing difficulties not only helps to enhance their academic writing skills but also fosters a more supportive and effective learning environment (Netta et al., 2024).

In sum, understanding the importance of academic writing and identifying the obstacles students face is essential for fostering academic success. By using tools such as Heaton's rubric to assess and address students' writing difficulties, teachers can significantly improve students' academic performance and prepare them for future academic and professional endeavors. Based on the explanation above, the study aims to explore about students' perception about common writing challenges that they face. The scope of this study is academic paragraph writing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As higher education systems increasingly emphasize critical thinking, research methodologies, and communication, understanding the conventions of academic writing becomes essential (Gloria & Mbato, 2023). This literature review explores the key aspects of academic writing, including its purpose, structure, challenges, and strategies for effective academic writing.

Academic writing is characterized by its formal tone, structure, and purpose (Tamene, 2020). It aims to communicate information clearly and persuasively to a scholarly audience. According to Hyland (2004), academic writing is primarily designed to inform

and contribute to knowledge within a particular discipline. This communication occurs through structured arguments, where claims are supported by evidence and reasoning. Academic texts typically adhere to conventions such as objectivity, clarity, and logical flow, all of which are crucial for maintaining credibility in scholarly discourse.

Another important aspect of academic writing is its discipline-specific nature. Each academic field has its own set of expectations and standards for how texts should be written. For instance, the language and structure of a scientific paper differ significantly from those in the humanities (Swales & Feak, 2012). Understanding these discipline-specific conventions is essential for students and scholars to effectively engage with the academic community.

Despite its importance, many students and scholars face significant challenges when engaging in academic writing. One of the most common difficulties is mastering the formal style required in academic contexts. Writers often struggle with avoiding colloquial language and ensuring that their work maintains a neutral, impersonal tone (Hinkel, 2004). This challenge is particularly evident among non-native English speakers, who may find it difficult to produce writing that adheres to the grammatical and stylistic norms of academic English (Rusmiati et al., 2023).

Another significant challenge is the process of argumentation. Academic writing is often centered around making claims and supporting them with evidence, which requires the ability to critically analyze sources and synthesize information. Many students find it challenging to develop coherent arguments and integrate diverse perspectives effectively (Graff & Birkenstein, 2010; Muniruzzaman & Afrin, 2024; Sarair et al., 2024; Sundari & Febriyanti, 2022). Additionally, academic writers must be able to properly cite sources, a process that requires knowledge of different citation styles (e.g., APA, MLA, and Chicago) and an understanding of intellectual property and plagiarism.

The pressure of time and deadlines also exacerbates these challenges. Writing academic texts can be a time-consuming process that involves multiple stages, including planning, drafting, revising, and editing (Gorbold, 2022). Many writers, especially students, report feeling overwhelmed by the volume of writing required in academic settings (Lunsford, 2009). These time constraints can lead to rushed writing, which often compromises the quality of the final product.

J. B. HEATON'S (1990) WRITING RUBRIC

J. B. Heaton is well-known for his contributions to language assessment, particularly in the context of writing. He developed a comprehensive writing rubric that is widely used

to assess learners' writing abilities, especially in academic settings. It outlines various criteria for evaluating writing, which can help instructors or evaluators make objective and structured assessments. Heaton's rubric is typically divided into several categories that focus on specific aspects of the writing process. Each category is assigned a numerical score or level, which allows the evaluator to give feedback on various facets of the writing. The rubric evaluates aspects like content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and coherence, among others.

Key Components of Heaton's Writing Rubric:

1. Content and Ideas

This category evaluates whether the writer has addressed the task, focused on the topic, and developed the argument or discussion with sufficient detail. The criteria are clear introduction of ideas, relevance to the task, development of arguments or points, and clarity of thesis or main argument.

2. Organization

This evaluates how well the ideas are structured and how logically the essay flows. A well-organized text makes it easier for the reader to follow the argument. The criteria are using of paragraphs, logical sequencing of ideas, clear transitions between sections, and adherence to a recognized organizational structure (e.g., introduction, body paragraphs, conclusion).

3. Grammar and Syntax

Grammar assessment focuses on the use of correct sentence structures and language rules. The criteria are proper use of tenses, agreement, word order, and sentence variety. Also, errors in punctuation and spelling are considered here.

4. Vocabulary and Word Choice

This category assesses the appropriateness and range of vocabulary used in the text. The criteria are correct word choice, variety in vocabulary, and precision in language. Overuse of simple or repetitive language may lower the score.

5. Coherence and Cohesion

Coherence refers to how well the ideas are connected and how logically they flow. Cohesion is about the mechanical devices used to link sentences and ideas. The criteria are using of transitional phrases, logical connections between sentences, and the use of cohesive devices (e.g., "therefore," "moreover," "for example").

6. Spelling and Punctuation

This aspect assesses the writer's attention to the mechanical aspects of writing. The criteria are proper spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and formatting. Minor errors may be acceptable at higher levels but should not impede understanding.

Common Usages of Heaton's Rubric:

1. Grading Essays

Educators can use Heaton's rubric to assign scores based on the criteria and levels provided. For each category, the evaluator assigns a score that corresponds to the performance level. The total score can give a quantitative measure of the student's writing proficiency.

2. Feedback and Improvement

The rubric also serves as a useful tool for providing constructive feedback. Teachers can indicate areas of strength and areas that need improvement by referring to specific categories like grammar or coherence. This targeted feedback helps students understand exactly where they need to focus their efforts.

3. Self-assessment

Students can use the rubric as a guide to evaluate their own writing. This can foster self-awareness and help students identify areas of improvement before submitting their work for evaluation.

Heaton's (1990) writing rubric provides a comprehensive framework for evaluating academic writing. It emphasizes multiple important aspects of writing, from content and organization to grammar and coherence. This multi-faceted approach ensures that evaluations are well-rounded and fair, while also offering valuable insights for both teachers and students. By using such rubrics, writers can develop a clearer understanding of academic writing expectations and work towards improving their skills over time.

Furthermore, several strategies can help individuals improve their academic writing skills. One important approach is developing a clear writing process. According to Silva (1993), a systematic approach to writing, such as pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing, can lead to more coherent and polished texts. By engaging in multiple drafts, writers can refine their arguments, enhance clarity, and correct errors in grammar and style.

Another useful strategy is peer review and feedback. Research by Peer & Boud (2003) suggests that collaborative learning, where peers review and critique each other's writing, can significantly improve writing skills. This process allows writers to see their work from different perspectives and identify areas for improvement that they might have missed during their own revisions. In addition, feedback from instructors or experienced scholars is invaluable for understanding the expectations of academic writing and for developing more sophisticated writing strategies.

Academic writing courses and workshops also offer practical assistance. Studies have shown that formal instruction in academic writing, which focuses on aspects such as structure, coherence, and citation, can have a positive impact on students' writing

abilities (MacDonald, 2000). These programs often provide targeted exercises that help writers improve specific skills, such as thesis development, argumentation, and paraphrasing.

Furthermore, exposure to academic texts and reading within one's discipline is crucial. Reading widely helps familiarize writers with the language, tone, and structure commonly used in academic writing. As noted by Lee (2014), academic writing is a skill that improves with practice, and regular reading and writing contribute to a deeper understanding of disciplinary conventions and writing techniques.

In conclusion, writing academic texts is an essential skill for those engaged in higher education and research. While the process can be challenging due to the demands of structure, style, and argumentation, various strategies can help individuals improve their academic writing. By adopting systematic writing processes, seeking feedback, engaging in formal writing instruction, and reading academic texts, writers can develop the skills needed to produce high-quality academic work. As the field of academic writing continues to evolve, it is important for writers to adapt to changing conventions while remaining focused on clear, evidence-based communication.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study aimed to investigate the common writing challenges encountered by students in academic settings. A quantitative research approach was employed, utilizing a mixed-methods design. Data collection involved administering a questionnaire to 35 English Education Department students at a university in Aceh, Indonesia, and conducting a document analysis of their academic writing samples. The questionnaire, comprising closed-ended questions, assessed the frequency and severity of various writing challenges. This quantitative data provided insights into the most prevalent issues experienced by students. Furthermore, a document analysis was performed on student writing samples, utilizing a writing rubric adapted from J. B. Heaton (1990). This analysis focused on specific writing elements such as the presence of clear topic sentences and controlling ideas. The combined data from the questionnaire and document analysis provided a comprehensive understanding of the writing challenges faced by these students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To obtain the results of the study, a writing rubric adapted from J. B. Heaton was employed. Minor adjustments were made to simplify the scoring process. It is important to note that the primary objective of this rubric was not to assign grades to student writing, but rather to identify the specific writing elements that presented the most significant challenges for students.

TABLE 1. J. B. Heaton's writing rubric

ASPECT	CRITERIA
Mechanics	Few errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing.
	Occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing
	Frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing
	Dominated by errors
Languages	Effective complex constructions, few errors of agreement, tense, number, word order, articles, pronouns and preposition
	Effective but simple constructions, minor problems in complex constructions, several errors of agreement, tense, number, word order, articles, pronouns and preposition
	problems in simple/complex constructions, frequent errors of negation, agreement, tense, number, word order, articles, pronouns and preposition, meaning confused or obscured.
	Almost no mastery of sentence construction rules, dominated by errors, does not communicative, not enough to evaluate.
Vocabulary	Sophisticated range, effective word choice, word form mastery.
	Adequate range, sometimes errors of word choice, usage but meaning not obscured
	Limited range, frequent errors of word choice, usage but meaning confused or obscured
	Essentially translation, little knowledge of English vocabulary, not enough to evaluate
Organization	Fluent expression, ideas clearly stated, well-organized, logical sequencing, cohesive
	Loosely organized but main ideas stand out, limited support, logical but incomplete sequencing
	Non-fluent, ideas confused or disconnected, lacks logical sequencing and development
	Does not communicate, no organization, not enough to evaluate
Content	Knowledgeable, thorough development of thesis, relevant to the topic
	Some knowledge of subject, limited development of thesis, mostly relevant to topic, but lacks detail
	Limited knowledge of subject, inadequate development of topic
	Does not show knowledge of subject, not enough to evaluate

1) *The mechanical aspects of writing (spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing)*

● Few errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing.
● Occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing
● Frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing
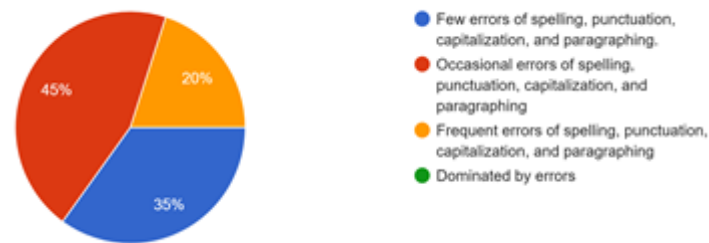● Dominated by errors

FIGURE 1. Students' challenge in mechanical aspects of writing

Figure 1 provides a clear overview of the mechanical aspects of writing, including spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing. It categorizes writing quality into four distinct levels based on the frequency of errors in these areas. The first group, accounting for 35% of the sample, demonstrates few errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing. This indicates that the students in this category exhibit a relatively high level of proficiency in adhering to basic writing conventions, suggesting that they have a solid understanding of the fundamental mechanics of writing.

The second group, which constitutes 45% of the sample, shows occasional errors in the same categories. These occasional errors could be due to lapses in attention, insufficient proofreading, or a lack of familiarity with specific rules. While these students still maintain a strong command over writing mechanics, their occasional mistakes indicate room for improvement, particularly in the areas of consistency and accuracy. Such errors may affect the overall clarity of the writing but do not significantly undermine its readability or comprehensibility.

The third group, making up 20% of the sample, is characterized by frequent errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing. Frequent mechanical mistakes in this category suggest a lower level of mastery over writing conventions, potentially affecting the overall quality of the writing. Students in this group may struggle with the technical aspects of writing, which can interfere with the clear communication of ideas. Finally, the result showed that none of the writing in the sample was dominated by mechanical errors, as evidenced by the 0% for the "Dominated by errors" category. This suggests that while some students may have issues with writing mechanics, none of them entirely fail to meet the basic standards of written communication.
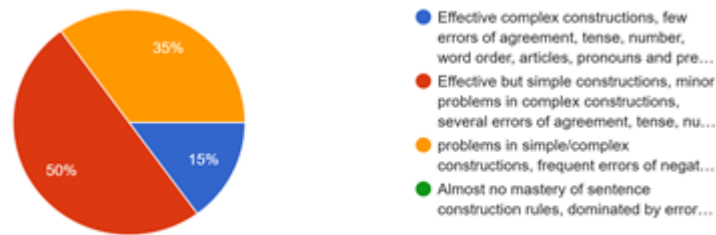
2) The language aspect aspects of writing

- ● Effective complex constructions, few errors of agreement, tense, number, word order, articles, pronouns and pre...
- ● Effective but simple constructions, minor problems in complex constructions, several errors of agreement, tense, nu...
- ● problems in simple/complex constructions, frequent errors of negat...
- ● Almost no mastery of sentence construction rules, dominated by error...

FIGURE 2. Students' challenge in language aspects of writing

Figure 2 on the language aspect of writing highlights different levels of proficiency in sentence construction, with particular focus on errors related to agreement, tense, number, word order, articles, pronouns, and prepositions. The first group, which represents 15% of the sample, demonstrates effective use of complex constructions with only a few errors in these areas. Students in this category show a strong grasp of grammatical rules, producing sentences that are not only grammatically correct but also stylistically sophisticated. Their ability to handle complex constructions with minimal errors suggests advanced linguistic skills, allowing them to communicate ideas with clarity and nuance.

The second group, making up 50% of the sample, is characterized by effective but simple sentence constructions, with minor problems in more complex structures. This group exhibits several errors in areas like agreement, tense, number, word order, articles, pronouns, and prepositions, indicating a good command of basic grammar but a need for further refinement in more intricate sentence structures. Although the overall effectiveness of communication remains intact, the frequency of these errors suggests that the students may lack full confidence or consistency in their command of more complex grammatical rules. These minor issues can sometimes lead to slight misunderstandings or disruptions in the flow of ideas.

The third group, representing 35% of the sample, struggles with both simple and complex constructions, featuring frequent errors in negation, agreement, tense, number, word order, articles, pronouns, and prepositions. In this group, meaning is often confused or obscured due to the frequency and severity of these errors. Such issues can significantly hinder communication, making it challenging for readers to grasp the intended message. The result showed that no writing in the sample was completely devoid of mastery in sentence construction, as indicated by the 0% in the "Almost no mastery" category. This suggests that while a portion of the students may

experience significant difficulties with language mechanics, none of them falls to a level where the writing is unintelligible or unable to be evaluated.

3) *Vocabulary aspects of writing*

FIGURE 3. Students' challenge in vocabulary aspects of writing

Figure 3 regarding the language aspect of writing presents a detailed analysis of vocabulary usage, word choice, and word form mastery across different levels of proficiency. The first group, comprising 10% of the sample, demonstrates a sophisticated range of vocabulary with effective word choices and mastery of word forms. Students in this category show a high level of linguistic ability, using precise and varied vocabulary to convey meaning clearly and effectively. This proficiency in vocabulary usage suggests that the writers are capable of expressing complex ideas with accuracy and nuance, significantly enhancing the overall quality of their writing.

The second group, which makes up 60% of the sample, is characterized by an adequate range of vocabulary, with occasional errors in word choice and usage. Although these errors appear sporadically, they do not obscure the meaning of the writing. This group demonstrates a functional command of language, with the ability to communicate effectively despite occasional lapses in vocabulary selection. The minor issues with word choice and usage suggest that while the writers may lack the refinement and precision seen in more advanced levels, they still possess a solid grasp of language that allows them to convey their intended messages clearly.

The third group, comprising 20% of the sample, faces challenges with a limited vocabulary range and frequent errors in word choice and usage, leading to confusion or obscured meaning. These frequent errors hinder effective communication, making it difficult for readers to fully grasp the writers' intended messages. Such issues suggest that the students in this category may not have fully mastered the nuances of the English language, which can impact the clarity and coherence of their writing. Finally, the data shows that 10% of the writing samples fall into the "Essentially translation" category, indicating that these students have minimal knowledge of English vocabulary. The errors in this group are so significant that the writing is not sufficient for a

meaningful evaluation, as the text lacks the necessary linguistic foundation to be comprehensible in the target language.
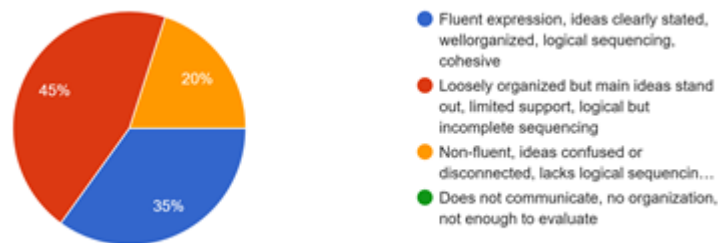
4) *Organization aspects of writing*

FIGURE 4. Students' challenge in organization aspects of writing

Figure 4 on the organization aspect of writing highlights varying levels of fluency, organization, and coherence in written expression. The first category, representing 35% of the sample, reflects students who demonstrate fluent expression, with their ideas clearly stated and logically sequenced. These students also display strong organizational skills, ensuring that their work is cohesive and easy to follow. The clarity and cohesion in their writing suggest a high level of proficiency, where the ideas flow smoothly from one point to the next, making the writing both engaging and easy to comprehend. This group of students successfully adheres to the structural principles of effective writing, providing well-organized and fully developed arguments or narratives.

The second group, which comprises 45% of the sample, exhibits a slightly weaker level of organization, with their writing being loosely structured. While the main ideas are still clear and identifiable, there is limited support for these ideas, and the logical sequencing is incomplete. This group's writing may still be understandable, but the lack of depth and insufficient development of ideas detracts from the overall effectiveness of the work. Although the students manage to communicate their main points, the absence of well-developed arguments and a full logical flow may result in gaps in understanding and less impact on the reader.

The third group, making up 20% of the sample, shows non-fluent writing where ideas are either confused or disconnected, and there is a lack of logical sequencing and development. These students struggle with organizing their thoughts in a coherent manner, which leads to unclear or fragmented communication. The absence of logical progression between ideas and the failure to develop arguments fully results in writing that is difficult to follow and understand. Finally, the result showed that 0% of the

sample fell into the category of "Does not communicate," meaning there are no instances where the writing was completely devoid of any organization or structure to the point of being unanalyzable. This suggests that all students were at least minimally capable of communicating some form of ideas, even if the quality of communication varied significantly.
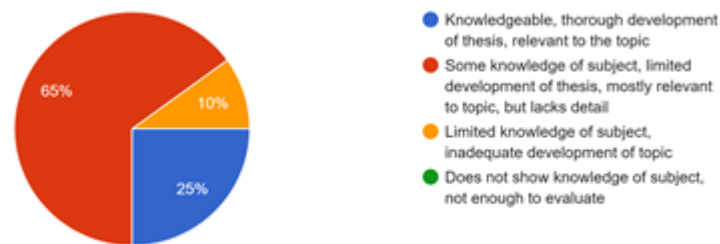
5) *Content aspects of writing*

FIGURE 5. Students' challenge in content aspects of writing

Figure 5 on the content aspect of writing outlines varying degrees of knowledge and the development of ideas, reflecting how well writers engage with their chosen topics and construct their thesis. The first category, representing 25% of the sample, includes students who exhibit a high level of knowledge and present a thorough development of their thesis. These students demonstrate a strong understanding of the subject matter, providing comprehensive support for their arguments. Their writing is deeply relevant to the topic, with each point contributing meaningfully to the overall discussion. This level of content mastery allows the students to engage with their topic in a nuanced and insightful manner, ensuring that the thesis is fully developed and explored.

The second group, which makes up 65% of the sample, shows a moderate understanding of the subject, with their thesis being developed to some extent, though not as thoroughly as in the first group. While the writing is mostly relevant to the topic, there is a noticeable lack of detail and depth in the development of the thesis. These students may present valid points, but the argument lacks the full elaboration and supporting evidence necessary to fully engage the reader. Despite this, the core ideas remain mostly on-topic, suggesting that the students possess a general understanding of the subject but may struggle with expanding on their arguments or providing detailed examples to strengthen their thesis.

The third group, comprising 10% of the sample, demonstrates limited knowledge of the subject and inadequate development of the topic. In this category, the students fail

to provide sufficient detail or support for their ideas, resulting in a superficial exploration of the subject. The lack of adequate development and weak connection to the topic makes the thesis less coherent and impactful. The result indicated that 0% of the sample fell into the "Does not show knowledge of subject" category, meaning that all students in the sample at least made an attempt to address the topic, even if their level of knowledge or development varied significantly. This suggests that every sample contained at least some recognizable effort to engage with the subject matter, albeit to varying degrees of effectiveness.

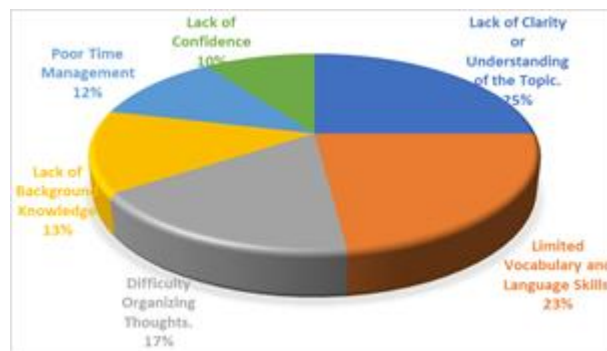*FACTORS CAUSING DIFFICULTIES TO CONTENT AND WRITING PROCESS*

FIGURE 6. Students' difficulties in content and writing process

1) Lack of clarity or understanding of the topic
More than half of the students (25%) are unsure about the subject matter. It can be challenging for them to express their ideas clearly and coherently since without a deep understanding, writing can feel like an overwhelming task.

2) Limited vocabulary and language skills
Most of the students (23%) got struggle to find the right words or phrases to articulate their ideas. A limited vocabulary can hinder their ability to express complex thoughts or explain concepts in detail.

3) Difficulty organizing thoughts
Almost half of the students (17%) had trouble organizing their ideas logically, leading to poorly structured essays or papers. They found that it was hard to create a coherent outline, making it difficult to present information in a clear and effective manner. Developing a clear, focused thesis can be difficult, especially because they were unsure of how to narrow their topic or make an original argument and this led to vague or weak papers. Without a clear thesis or main argument, the content may lack purpose or direction, resulting in weak writing.

4) Lack of background knowledge

Some students (13%) struggling to synthesize information or to create a content. They struggle with finding reliable sources, synthesizing information, or incorporating research effectively into their work may face difficulties in producing strong content.

5) Poor time management

Some of the students (12%) felt that they did not have enough time to do their writing. Students might wander off-topic, which can make their writing unclear or disjointed. In addition, some students struggle to identify weaknesses in their own work or to make necessary improvements in content and structure.

6) Lack of confidence

Some students (10%) had struggle with self-doubt, leading to a fear of making mistakes. This lack of confidence can make it difficult for them to express their thoughts or take risks with their writing.

The findings highlight that difficulties in content, vocabulary, and language are the primary obstacles for students. With 65% of students identifying content-related challenges, it is clear that many students struggle to organize their thoughts and present coherent, well-developed ideas in their writing. This indicates a need for enhanced instruction in planning, brainstorming, and developing content to help students better articulate their academic arguments.

The second most significant challenge revealed by the study is related to vocabulary, with 60% of students expressing difficulty in selecting the appropriate words for their writing. A limited vocabulary can hinder students from fully expressing their ideas and can lead to overly simplistic or imprecise writing. This underscores the importance of integrating vocabulary-building exercises and strategies into writing instruction. Providing students with the tools to expand their vocabulary can greatly improve their ability to write more clearly and persuasively in academic contexts.

The study also highlights the difficulties students face with language, including grammar, syntax, and sentence structure. Approximately 50% of students noted these challenges, suggesting that while basic language proficiency may be established, students still struggle with the nuances of academic writing. This finding indicates that targeted grammar instruction and feedback on writing mechanics should be emphasized to help students refine their language skills and avoid common writing errors that can affect the clarity and flow of their academic paragraphs.

Finally, the findings indicate that a smaller percentage of students (45%) reported challenges with both mechanics and organization. While these difficulties are less prevalent than issues related to content, vocabulary, and language, they still play a crucial role in the overall quality of students' writing. A lack of attention to organizational structure and mechanical errors can undermine the coherence and readability of academic work.

The findings of the study corroborate those in the research by Fhonna and Ismail (2022) and Helmanda et al. (2022). Therefore, integrating lessons on the importance of proper paragraph structure, punctuation, and overall organization should be an essential part of writing curricula to ensure students can produce well-organized and polished academic writing.

Conclusions

This study sheds light on the common writing challenges that students face when writing academic paragraphs, offering valuable insights into the areas that require focused attention and improvement. The finding reveals that content development, vocabulary selection, and language proficiency pose the most significant challenges for students. Many students struggle with organizing thoughts and developing coherent ideas, emphasizing the need for enhanced instruction in planning and brainstorming. A significant number of students reported difficulty with vocabulary, highlighting the importance of vocabulary-building exercises. A considerable number of students faced challenges with grammar and syntax, indicating a need for targeted grammar instruction. While less frequent, organizational and mechanical errors also impact writing quality. These findings underscore the importance of comprehensive writing instruction that addresses all these areas to improve student writing outcomes

Addressing the identified challenges in content, vocabulary, language, mechanics, and organization is critical for improving students' academic writing skills. By providing targeted instruction and resources in these areas, educators can better support students in overcoming their writing difficulties. A focus on content development and vocabulary expansion, along with a commitment to refining language skills and writing mechanics, will help students develop more effective academic writing strategies, ultimately leading to greater success in their academic endeavors.

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