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Challenges and Strategies in Developing Academic Writing Skills Among Humans

Shofia Azzahara [1], Nazwa Nurul Tazqia[2], Muhammad Rasya Aulia[3]

[1, 2, 3] UIN Palangka Raya

Corresponding Author's Email: shofiaazzahara@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Academic writing skills are essential for university students to express their ideas in a structured, rational, and scientifically compliant manner. In practice, students still face various obstacles, such as determining the direction of the discussion, developing ideas, constructing arguments, utilizing academic language, and processing sources through paraphrasing, quoting, and referencing. This study aims to examine the various challenges faced by students in developing academic writing skills while identifying strategies to support the enhancement of these abilities. The research employs a qualitative approach with a library research method, reviewing relevant journal articles, books, and academic publications. The gathered information was analyzed descriptively and analytically by grouping it into several key themes: writing difficulties, idea and argument development, source utilization, feedback provision, revision, and strategies for improving writing skills. The findings reveal that challenges in academic writing stem not only from limited language proficiency, but also from students' capacity to develop critical thinking, organize information, and construct evidence-based arguments. Constructing outlines, utilizing relevant and high-quality sources, practicing progressively, engaging in peer feedback, revising, and undergoing continuous evaluation serve as effective strategies to enhance students' academic writing skills. Therefore, writing skills need to be developed through consistent practice and refinement, enabling students to produce scientific works that are focused, logical, argumentative, and aligned with academic standards.

Keywords: *Academic writing skills; Idea development; Scientific argumentation; Writing strategies; Scholarly sources; Text evaluation; Revision*

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INTRODUCTION

Academic writing skills are among the essential foundational abilities for university students in pursuing higher education. These skills are not only related to producing various scientific works, such as papers, essays, research reports, and undergraduate theses, but also require students to systematically structure ideas, construct clear arguments, and use formal language in accordance with academic standards. However, in practice, many students still encounter various obstacles in developing ideas, structuring arguments, and correctly applying academic writing conventions (Irawati, Malabar, and Mangilo 2024).

Throughout their coursework, students continue to face numerous challenges when developing academic writing proficiency. These difficulties may include limitations in generating and developing ideas, organizing arguments systematically, constructing cohesive paragraphs, using academic language, and properly applying citations and references. This situation indicates that scientific writing skills depend not only on language proficiency, but also on students' abilities to think critically, organize information, and convey ideas logically. Research by Aldabbus and Almansouri indicates that students still struggle with thesis formulation, idea organization, and coherent paragraph construction (Aldabbus and Almansouri 2022).

Problems in academic writing are also related to students' ability to apply technical rules in scholarly works. Frequently encountered difficulties include grammar, spelling, vocabulary selection, punctuation, intersentential coherence, paragraph structuring, paraphrasing, citation, and bibliography writing. These various challenges demonstrate that writing skills need to be developed through a continuous learning process. It is insufficient for students merely to understand writing rules; they also need opportunities to practice and refine their writing progressively (Bram and Angelina 2022).

One approach that can help students overcome these difficulties is applying appropriate strategies in the early stages of writing. Activities such as brainstorming and free writing can assist students in expressing various ideas before determining the main concept and developing it into a more focused piece of writing. By providing opportunities to explore thoughts beforehand, students can more easily determine the focus of discussion and structure their writing systematically. This indicates that the process of idea generation is an essential component that requires attention before students compose academic writing in its entirety.

The development of writing skills also requires students' active engagement in the learning process. Strategies employed by students may include planning the learning process, developing ideas, organizing information, managing learning conditions, and interacting with others. Therefore, academic writing instruction should not rely on a single approach, but rather combine multiple strategies to assist students across various stages of writing. Such an approach enables students to become more independent in developing their writing skills according to their learning needs and characteristics.

In addition to independent strategies, students also need feedback on the texts they have produced. Feedback helps students identify parts of their writing that still need improvement while understanding aspects that are already well-written. One form of this is peer feedback, an activity where students read and provide input on each other's work. Through this process, students not only receive suggestions, but also learn to evaluate writing quality, understand errors, and make improvements to their own work. Consequently, the writing process can proceed comprehensively, encompassing drafting, evaluation, revision, and refinement (Wei and Liu 2024).

Apart from instructional strategies and feedback, digital technology developments also provide opportunities to support academic writing instruction. Various digital media can be used to help students

obtain feedback, perform editing, and improve their writing more flexibly. One such implementation is electronic written feedback, which allows instructors to provide comments or corrections through digital platforms. The use of electronic feedback can serve as a supportive medium for students to understand weaknesses in their writing and make improvements based on the input received (Putri, Hadiyanto, and Mali 2024).

Based on these various challenges and strategies, the improvement of students' academic writing skills needs to be carried out through a sustainable process. Instruction should not stop at theoretical delivery, but should provide opportunities for students to discover ideas, compose texts, receive feedback, perform revisions, and evaluate final outcomes. The use of appropriate writing strategies, student active engagement, the application of peer feedback, and the utilization of technology can complement each other to support the development of writing proficiency. With this approach, students are expected not only to be able to produce academic writing, but also to possess the ability to independently develop and improve their texts (Dari, Rahmawati, and Akhiriyah 2022).

METHODS OF RESEARCH

This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research method. The choice of this method is based on the research objective, which aims to examine in depth various issues related to students' academic writing skills, including the obstacles they encounter and the strategies that can be implemented to enhance these abilities. Therefore, the study was conducted by reviewing and interpreting various pieces of information retrieved from relevant academic sources.

The research data were drawn from various scientific literature, particularly journal articles, books, and other academic publications related to students' academic writing skills. The reviewed literature encompasses discussions on writing difficulties, instructional strategies, feedback provision, academic literacy, and the use of technology to support writing activities. The selection of sources was carried out by considering the alignment between the literature content and the research focus, source credibility, and the recency of the information used.

The data collection process was performed by searching for and identifying literature based on keywords related to the research topic, including *academic writing skills*, *academic writing difficulties*, *writing strategies*, *student writing*, and *digital learning*. The retrieved literature was subsequently screened to ensure its relevance to the problems under investigation. Relevant data or information were then recorded and categorized into several main themes, such as the forms of student difficulties, factors influencing writing ability, skill development strategies, the use of feedback, and the utilization of digital media.

The collected data were subsequently analyzed using a descriptive-analytical technique. The analysis was carried out by reading and comprehending the contents of each source, identifying information pertinent to the research focus, and grouping it based on specific themes. Furthermore, findings from various sources were compared to identify similarities, differences, and emerging trends. The results of this comparison were then interpreted to obtain a more comprehensive overview of the challenges faced by students and the strategies that can be utilized to improve academic writing skills. Finally, the analytical findings were systematically presented in descriptive form to draw conclusions aligned with the research objectives.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Students' Difficulties in Academic Writing

Students' academic writing skills are not only determined by their ability to use language according to established rules, but also by their capacity to process ideas into structured discussions. During the writing process, students need to determine topics, understand the issues being discussed, select relevant information, and subsequently develop that information into cohesive paragraphs. Difficulties frequently arise when students have chosen a topic but are unable to clearly define the boundaries of the discussion. Consequently, the writing may develop too broadly, become repetitive, or lack a strong focus. This condition indicates that academic writing is fundamentally an activity involving both cognitive and linguistic skills, rather than merely assembling sentences (Eryansyah et al. 2026).

Another problem is evident in students' paragraph development capabilities. Some students can identify main ideas yet still struggle when required to provide explanations, examples, reasons, or evidence supporting those ideas. Consequently, paragraphs become overly brief or consist merely of general statements without adequate explanation. In academic writing, however, every idea needs to be elaborated so that readers can understand the relationship between the assertions made and the issues under examination. This paragraph development capacity is also tied to vocabulary mastery and the ability to construct sentences effectively, ensuring that ideas are conveyed clearly (Romrome 2026).

Writing difficulties can also be influenced by students' proficiency in using academic language. Inappropriate word choices, ineffective sentence structures, and unclear intersentential relationships can render a piece of writing difficult to comprehend. In an academic context, students must not only convey opinions, but also present them systematically and based on justifiable reasoning. Therefore, language mastery must develop concurrently with the ability to elaborate the content of the writing. The better students understand how to connect language with the ideas they wish to communicate, the easier it is for them to construct coherent texts (Taye and Mengesha 2024).

Aside from linguistic issues, limited writing experience also constitutes a factor affecting the quality of student writing. Writing skills cannot develop solely through a theoretical understanding; rather, they require repeated and consistent practice. Through practice, students can recognize common errors, refine their methods of organizing ideas, and learn to adapt their writing to the characteristics of scientific works. This process becomes increasingly effective when students receive feedback on their texts and subsequently implement improvements based on that input. Thus, writing difficulties should be viewed as an integral part of the learning process that can be ameliorated through continuous practice and evaluation.

Based on this elaboration, students' obstacles in academic writing encompass a broad scope. The problems are not restricted to grammatical errors, but also concern the ability to determine focus, develop ideas, structure paragraphs, utilize sources, and construct logical relationships among ideas. Therefore, academic writing instruction must provide balanced attention to both linguistic aspects and content development. An approach that merely emphasizes language rules without training students to develop critical thinking remains insufficient for producing high-quality academic writing.

The Ability to Develop Ideas and Construct Arguments

Idea development is a vital component of academic writing, as the quality of a text is heavily influenced by the writer's ability to process concepts into focused discussions. Students need to transform overly general topics into more specific issues so that the discussion maintains clear boundaries. Once the

focus is established, the main idea can be elaborated through several supporting ideas that bear a direct relationship to the core problem. This process helps make the writing more structured and prevents the discussion from drifting toward information irrelevant to the writing objective (Rizki et al. 2025).

The determined ideas must also be arranged in a logical sequence. Students can construct an outline beforehand to ensure that each section serves a distinct function. Such an outline assists in determining what information should be included in the introduction, discussion, or conclusion. With prior planning, students are not forced to compose the entire text simultaneously without direction; instead, they can develop their writing progressively based on the relationship between main ideas and supporting concepts. This type of planning process helps students produce more organized and reader-friendly texts (Ananda, Mardiah, and Fajaryani 2024).

In academic writing, idea development is also closely intertwined with the ability to construct arguments. An argument cannot consist merely of personal opinions; it must be accompanied by supporting reasons and evidence. Students need to demonstrate why an opinion is acceptable and what information can be employed to reinforce it. Consequently, the use of scholarly sources plays a critical function in building arguments. Sources should not merely be inserted as citations, but must be integrated with the writer's own ideas so that their presence genuinely contributes to the discussion (Murtadho 2021).

Argumentation skills can also be developed by comparing multiple perspectives from different sources. When students rely on a single source, the discussion tends to stop at information delivery. Conversely, utilizing multiple sources enables students to recognize similarities, differences, and divergent viewpoints regarding a particular issue. Through this process, students can formulate their own analysis based on the examined information. Thus, academic writing transcends a mere compilation of summaries from various sources, evolving instead into a discourse that demonstrates the author's critical thinking capabilities (Cheong, Zhu, and Xu 2021).

Ultimately, the quality of argumentation heavily relies on students' ability to connect problems, ideas, evidence, and conclusions. Every key statement should possess a clear foundation, and every piece of evidence utilized must relate directly to the issue under discussion. If this connection fails to materialize, the writing may appear heavily referenced yet lack robust analytical rigor. Therefore, students must learn to use sources selectively and position them as part of the argument-building process rather than treating them as mere supplementary decorations for the text.

The Use of Sources, Paraphrasing, Citations, and References

The use of sources is a defining characteristic of academic writing. Students must employ sources to reinforce information, provide a foundation for assertions, and demonstrate that their discussion rests on a scholarly basis. Nevertheless, utilizing sources does not imply that students merely need to gather numerous articles and insert direct quotes into their texts. Information derived from sources must be read, comprehended, selected, and integrated with the ongoing discussion. This capacity determines whether the utilized sources genuinely contribute to the quality of the writing (Shofiah, Amaliah, and Putera 2023).

Paraphrasing represents a crucial skill because students frequently draw upon information from external sources when composing scholarly works. Paraphrasing is not merely substituting a few words from an original sentence with synonyms; students must first comprehend the underlying meaning of the source and then reexpress that information using different sentence structures and modes of expression without altering the original meaning. This process requires both reading comprehension and the ability to reassemble information using one's own voice. Difficulties in paraphrasing often cause student texts to

remain excessively close to the original source material (Urva and Rati 2020).

Citations must also be applied appropriately according to the needs of the discussion. Not all information from sources requires direct quotation. In many instances, students can rearticulate source ideas through paraphrasing followed by appropriate citation. Direct quotations are more appropriately utilized when the original phrasing carries special significance or needs to be preserved precisely as written by the original author. By understanding this distinction, students can avoid excessive quotation and ensure their writing reflects their own analytical thinking.

In addition to understanding citation mechanics, students must ensure alignment between in-text citations and the bibliography. Every source utilized in the discussion must appear in the reference list, and conversely, sources listed in the bibliography should actually be consulted within the text. Discrepancies between the two can undermine academic rigor. Therefore, reference management must be initiated early in the writing process to prevent students from encountering difficulties during the final review of their scholarly works (Oktafiandi, Sofian, and Rezeki 2024).

Source quality must also remain a central consideration in academic writing. Students should evaluate not merely whether a source is accessible online, but also the credibility of the publisher, the authors' identities, publication years, content relevance, and alignment with the research topic. Relevant sources help strengthen arguments, whereas irrelevant sources can cause the discussion to lose focus. Consequently, source utilization skills encompass multiple stages simultaneously: searching for sources, assessing their quality, comprehending their contents, paraphrasing or quoting, and accurately documenting them in the reference list (Dalam and Esai 2021).

Strategies and Processes for Improving Academic Writing Skills

The enhancement of academic writing proficiency must be pursued through planned and incremental processes. Students can begin by defining topics, formulating research problems, locating appropriate sources, and constructing outlines prior to drafting. These stages help students mitigate difficulties when initiating the writing process because the direction of the discussion has been established beforehand. With proper planning, students can more easily determine required information and avoid deviations from the main focus (Hafeez and Ramzan 2022).

Initial drafting should not be burdened by premature demands for perfection. At the outset, students can concentrate on how ideas are developed and organized into cohesive discussions. Once a draft is complete, the text can be reread to identify sections that remain unclear, overly repetitive, lacking evidence, or disconnected from the core focus. Through this approach, writing does not terminate upon completion of the first draft; rather, it is followed by systematic review and refinement.

Feedback serves an essential role in text revision. Students sometimes fail to recognize weaknesses in their own writing because they are already overly familiar with what they intend to convey. Input from instructors or peers provides alternative perspectives regarding idea clarity, text structure, source utilization, and argument strength. Constructive feedback helps students identify specific areas requiring improvement and understand how those enhancements can be executed. This process renders writing activities more reflective as students learn to evaluate their own texts (Yan, Zhu, and Ye 2024).

Revision should not be misconstrued merely as correcting spelling or grammatical errors. Deeper revisions must also target argumentative structures, intersentential relationships, evidence sufficiency, and source relevance. If a paragraph presents a sound idea yet lacks adequate explanation, students need to incorporate evidence or expand their analysis. Conversely, if certain segments bear no relation to the core

focus, those parts should be condensed or removed. Thus, revision functions as a process to elevate content quality alongside presentational form (Murtadho 2021).

Instructional strategies must likewise be tailored to students' proficiency levels. Students in introductory stages can be provided with more practice in determining topics, outlining, constructing sentences, and developing paragraphs. Meanwhile, students possessing foundational writing skills can be directed toward more complex competencies, such as comparing research findings, synthesizing multiple sources, constructing arguments, and generating critical analyses. Gradual instruction enables students to progress according to their individual needs and capabilities (Pamelasari, Hardianti, and Rozi 2023).

Academic writing skills develop through consistent practice accompanied by ongoing evaluation of the text. Students need opportunities to write, receive feedback, comprehend areas requiring improvement, and apply that input during revision. This cyclical process helps students recognize their writing weaknesses while cultivating the capacity to correct them in subsequent assignments. Therefore, strong academic writing is not formed through a single attempt, but through iterative processes involving drafting, evaluation, feedback, and refinement. This habit is vital for university students, as the acquired skills can be applied across various forms of academic work throughout their higher education journey (Cahyani and Murtafi'ah 2022).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that students' academic writing skills still face numerous obstacles, encompassing both linguistic aspects and cognitive development capacities. These challenges are reflected in students' difficulties in determining topics and discussion boundaries, developing ideas, structuring cohesive paragraphs, selecting appropriate academic language, and building logical connections among ideas. Consequently, problems in writing are not merely restricted to grammatical, spelling, or lexical errors, but are also related to students' ability to process information and systematically organize their thoughts.

The research reveals that the ability to develop ideas constitutes one of the determining factors of academic writing quality. Broad ideas need to be channeled into more specific discussions so that the writing maintains a clear focus. Students need to establish core concepts and elaborate them through supporting information relevant to the addressed problem. Constructing an outline prior to writing can also assist students in organizing the flow of discussion so that every section of the text possesses clear coherence and purpose. This approach renders the writing process more directed, enabling students to develop their texts progressively.

Argumentation construction likewise serves as a vital element in academic writing. This study indicates that sound arguments cannot rely solely on the author's opinions; rather, they must be reinforced with relevant reasons and evidence. Scholarly sources can be utilized to provide a foundation for assertions while strengthening the discussion. Moreover, employing multiple sources enables students to examine diverse perspectives, compare viewpoints, and identify similarities and differences within the retrieved information. Consequently, students can develop their own independent analysis, preventing the text from remaining a mere compilation or summary of external opinions.

In addition to idea and argument development, this study highlights that source utilization proficiency is also an essential component of academic writing. Students must read and comprehend sources prior to integrating them into their texts. The acquired information can subsequently be conveyed through

paraphrasing or quoting according to the analytical needs of the discussion. Paraphrasing must be executed by comprehending the source's underlying concept and reexpressing it using one's own sentence structures without altering the original meaning. Meanwhile, direct quotations should be used selectively to ensure the text retains sufficient space for the author's original thought and analysis.

The accuracy of in-text citations and bibliographical references also warrants students' attention. Sources utilized in the discussion must align with those listed in the reference list, and vice versa. Furthermore, source selection should not be based merely on the accessibility of information, but must also consider credibility, publication year, relevance, and alignment with the research topic. Therefore, utilizing sources in academic writing encompasses an iterative sequence of activities: searching and selecting sources, evaluating their quality, comprehending the retrieved information, processing it through paraphrasing or quoting, and accurately documenting it in the reference list.

This research also demonstrates that enhancing academic writing proficiency requires systematic and sustainable stages. The process can commence with determining topics, formulating research problems, gathering relevant sources, constructing outlines, and subsequently expanding those outlines into drafts. At the outset, students are not required to produce flawless texts immediately, as drafts function as foundational platforms for developing ideas. Once a draft is compiled, students must conduct reviews to identify sections that remain unclear, repetitive, unsupported by evidence, or divergent from the core focus.

Feedback plays a crucial role in helping students elevate the quality of their writing. Students sometimes fail to recognize shortcomings in their own texts because they are already overly familiar with their intended message. Input from instructors or peers provides alternative perspectives, enabling students to identify areas requiring improvement. Such feedback may pertain to idea clarity, text structure, argument strength, or source utilization. Upon receiving this input, students can utilize it as a foundation to execute revisions.

Revision also represents an essential component of the academic writing development process. Refinement must not target solely spelling, grammar, or sentence mechanics, but must also address the content and conceptual structure of the text. Students need to examine whether their arguments are robustly structured, whether each idea exhibits a clear relationship, whether the utilized evidence is sufficient, and whether the cited sources are genuinely relevant. Ideas lacking adequate explanation must be elaborated, whereas segments disconnected from the main focus should be condensed or eliminated. Thus, revision functions to elevate content quality while refining presentational form.

Overall, this study affirms that academic writing proficiency cannot be acquired instantaneously; rather, it develops through iterative practice, evaluation, feedback, and refinement. Students need to cultivate consistent writing habits and learn from shortcomings identified in each assignment. Instructional strategies must likewise be tailored to students' proficiency levels, progressing from introductory practice in topic selection, outlining, sentence and paragraph construction, to more complex competencies such as synthesizing multiple sources, comparing research findings, constructing arguments, and generating critical analyses. Through this process, students are expected to produce structured, clear, argumentative academic works aligned with scholarly standards, while simultaneously possessing the capacity to independently evaluate and refine their own writing.

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