



ELEJ

English Language Education Journal

E-ISSN: 2828-5077

<https://jurnal.unikastpaulus.ac.id/index.php/elej>

Vol. 4, No. 1, April 2025, Pp. 33-44

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD LEARNING ACADEMIC WRITING COURSE

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Abstract: Academic writing is a crucial skill in higher education. It enables students to communicate ideas, construct arguments, and present research effectively. However, for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, academic writing poses significant challenges due to linguistic limitations, cognitive demands, and unfamiliar rhetorical conventions, which may influence students' attitudes toward learning. This study aims to explore undergraduate students' attitudes toward learning academic writing courses in higher education. A qualitative research design was employed to gain in-depth insights into students' attitudes. The participants were undergraduate students from English Education program who had completed an academic writing course. The participants were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews, allowing participants to share their experiences and perceptions in depth. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns related to students' beliefs, emotions, and behaviors toward academic writing. The study revealed that students' attitudes toward learning Academic Writing course are complex and multidimensional. Although students recognized academic writing as an essential skill for higher education, they also experienced difficulties related to grammar, vocabulary, organization, coherence, citation, and plagiarism.

Keywords: academic writing, student attitudes, EFL learners, higher education

INTRODUCTION

Academic writing is a fundamental skill in higher education because it enables students to communicate ideas clearly and present research findings systematically. Hyland (2019) stated that through academic writing, students develop analytical thinking and participate in scholarly discussions, which are essential for academic and professional growth. Academic writing requires a formal style, logical organization, and credible sources to support arguments (Nga, 2022; Dernoun, 2015). For EFL learners, these requirements often present challenges such as limited vocabulary, grammatical errors, and difficulties in structuring ideas, which may hinder their writing performance and confidence.

Students' attitudes toward writing significantly affect their motivation and engagement in learning (Alzubi & Nazim, 2024; Zhou & Hiver, 2022). Positive attitudes encourage students to invest effort, seek feedback, and persist in completing writing tasks, while negative attitudes may lead to avoidance, frustration, and writing anxiety. Hyland (2019) stated that through academic writing, students develop analytical thinking and participate in scholarly discussions, which are essential for academic and professional growth.

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Writing self-efficacy, or students' beliefs in their ability to perform writing tasks successfully, also plays a crucial role in shaping attitudes toward academic writing (Fitria, 2022; Romrome & Mbato, 2022). Higher self-efficacy is associated with greater confidence, persistence, and improved writing outcomes, particularly for students learning in EFL contexts.

Technology and access to online learning resources also significantly influence students' attitudes and engagement in academic writing (Harmer, 2015; Nurfadillah & Nurcholis, 2025). Digital platforms and technology-

assisted language learning can support EFL learners in developing writing skills by providing interactive exercises, collaborative tools, and timely feedback. Self-regulated learning strategies, including planning, monitoring, and evaluating one's writing, have been shown to improve both writing performance and attitudes toward academic writing (Abadikhah et al., 2018; Hsieh & Chuang, 2022).

Several previous studies have examined students' attitudes toward academic writing in EFL contexts. Fitria (2022) found that Indonesian undergraduate students generally showed positive attitudes toward learning writing through virtual platforms, although they still faced difficulties related to grammar and idea development. Similarly, Romrome and Mbato (2022) reported that students' motivation in essay writing was strongly influenced by writing beliefs, self-efficacy, and attitudes. Nga (2022) revealed that students with positive attitudes and stronger self-efficacy tended to perform better in academic writing tasks.

Although these studies have contributed valuable insights, limited research has specifically explored students' attitudes toward learning the Academic Writing course in the context of Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus. Therefore, this study aims to investigate undergraduate students' attitudes toward learning the Academic Writing course, focusing on their perceptions, challenges, motivation, and learning experiences.

METHOD

Research Design and Participants

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore students' attitudes toward learning academic writing courses in higher education. A qualitative approach was selected because it allows the researcher to understand participants' experiences, perceptions, and personal responses in depth through direct interaction. The study focused on how students interpret their own learning experiences in academic writing rather than measuring outcomes using numerical data.

Qualitative research is appropriate for examining complex learning issues that involve linguistic, cognitive, and affective factors. Through this design, the researcher aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of how students' attitudes toward academic writing courses are shaped by their

learning experiences, as qualitative inquiry helps reveal learners' perspectives in authentic educational contexts.

The participants of this study were five (5) undergraduate students from the English Education program at Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus. The participants have completed academic writing course. Purposive sampling was used to select students with relevant experience in academic writing who could provide meaningful insights on the research topic.

Instruments

The primary instrument used in this study was a semi-structured interview guide. The interview questions were designed to explore students' attitudes toward learning academic writing, including their feelings, challenges, motivation, the influence of teaching methods or classroom activities, and the strategies they use to improve their writing skills. By conducting semi-structured interview, participants were able to express their experiences freely, while the researcher could ask follow-up questions to gain a deeper understanding. This type of instrument is widely used in language learning research because it produces rich and detailed data regarding learners' perceptions and learning experiences (Fitria, 2022).

The interview was guided by the following key questions: (1) How do you feel about learning academic writing in your course? (2) What challenges do you face when learning academic writing? (3) What motivates you to learn academic writing? (4) How do teaching methods or classroom activities influence your attitude toward academic writing? (5) What strategies do you use to improve your academic writing skills?

Data Collection and Data Analyses

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted individually with five participants. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes and was carried out face-to-face. This method enabled the researcher to obtain detailed and in-depth information about students' attitudes toward learning academic writing.

All interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accuracy in capturing responses. The recordings were later transcribed verbatim for analysis.

During the interviews, participants were encouraged to share their experiences, opinions, and challenges openly, allowing the researcher to gather rich data that reflect students' real attitudes toward academic writing in higher education contexts. The collected data then analyzed using thematic analyses (Braun and Clerk, 2019).

RESULTS

The findings of this study were derived from a thematic analysis of interviews conducted with five undergraduate students in the English Education program. The analysis revealed four major themes related to students' attitudes toward learning academic writing: difficulties or challenges in learning academic writing, Students' Motivation, Influence of Teaching Methods on Students' Attitudes and Strategies to Improve Academic Writing Skills.

Challenges in Learning Academic Writing

The interview results indicated that difficulties in learning academic writing were among the most significant challenges experienced by participants. Several students reported problems related to grammar, vocabulary, organization, and understanding academic conventions. One participant stated, *"I often struggle with grammar and organizing my ideas clearly,"* (CP), while another participant explained, *"My main difficulty is finding the right vocabulary and avoiding plagiarism. Moreover, I find it hard to structure paragraphs and develop arguments."* (EK). These findings suggest that both linguistic and structural aspects significantly affect students' ability to produce effective academic writing.

Another important finding relates to students' lack of confidence in learning academic writing. Feelings of anxiety, stress, and lack of confidence frequently emerged in the interviews. *"I feel that academic writing is important, but sometimes it is difficult and stressful for me,"* (CP), while other participant stated, *"I feel anxious when learning academic writing because it requires many rules. I think academic writing is useful but sometimes boring."* (PS). Meanwhile, another participant showed mixed feelings, stating, *"I feel interested in learning academic writing, although it is quite challenging"* (EK). These responses demonstrate that emotional factors play an important role

in shaping students' attitudes toward academic writing.

Students' Motivation in Learning Academic Writing

Regarding motivation in learning academic writing course, the study revealed that students' motivation plays a significant role in their engagement in learning academic writing. Participants expressed various motivations related to academic success, future goals, and personal development. One participant stated, *"I am motivated because academic writing is important for my future career"* (CP). At the same time, other participant explained, *"I am motivated because I want to write a good thesis in the future"* (EK). Similarly, another participant mentioned, *"I am motivated by getting good grades and improving my English skills. Academic writing helps me express my ideas clearly"* (PS). These findings indicate that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation contribute to students' persistence in learning academic writing.

Influence of Teaching Methods on Students' Attitudes

In addition, participants highlighted the important role of teaching methods and classroom activities in influencing their attitudes toward academic writing. Some students emphasized the importance of clear explanations, interactive learning, and supportive feedback. Participant (CP) stated *"When the lecturer gives clear explanations and examples, I feel more confident,"* while other participant (EK) mentioned, *"Group discussions help me understand writing better and make me more engaged."* Meanwhile, another participant stated, *"When the lecturer uses technology, I feel more interested in learning"* (EL). These findings suggest that effective teaching practices can positively influence students' attitudes and reduce their learning difficulties.

Strategies Used by Students to Improve Academic Writing Skills

This study also found theme dealing with strategies applied by the students in learning academic writing course. The study showed that students use various strategies to improve their academic writing skills. Participants reported practicing writing, reading academic texts, using digital tools, revising their work, and applying planning techniques. One participant stated, *"I usually practice writing regularly and read journal articles to*

improve my skills" (CP), while other participant (EK) explained, *"I use online tools like Grammarly and try to revise my writing carefully."* Another participant (PS) mentioned, *"I try to follow feedback from the lecturer and rewrite my assignments."* These responses indicate that students actively apply different strategies to overcome their challenges in academic writing.

DISCUSSION

This study explored students' attitudes toward learning an Academic Writing course by focusing on four major themes found in the results: difficulties or challenges in learning academic writing, Students' Motivation, Influence of Teaching Methods on Students' Attitudes and Strategies to Improve Academic Writing Skills.

Regarding difficulties in learning academic writing, participants reported problems related to grammar, vocabulary, coherence, organization, citation, and plagiarism. These findings suggest that students' struggles are not limited to language form but also involve academic literacy practices. Ali & Al (2015) emphasized that academic writing difficulties among EFL learners are closely related to issues in coherence, organization, use of sources, and academic conventions, which include referencing and developing ideas into well-structured arguments. Likewise, Murray & Nallaya (2016) found that many university students face difficulties in organizing ideas and developing logical arguments in academic essays. In this study, participants' concerns about paragraph development and referencing rules indicate that writing instruction should combine language support with explicit guidance on academic conventions.

The findings also revealed the emotional dimension of students' attitudes. Several participants described academic writing as stressful, difficult, and anxiety-provoking. These reactions are common among EFL learners who often fear making mistakes or failing to meet academic expectations. Kirmızı & Kirmızı (2015) found that writing anxiety is closely related to low self-efficacy and negative writing experiences among university students. Similarly, Fitria (2022) reported that many undergraduate EFL learners experience low confidence and anxiety when completing writing tasks in academic settings. In the present study, participants who expressed anxiety and low confidence may need scaffolded

learning experiences, constructive feedback, and gradual task progression. When students feel supported, they are more likely to participate actively and improve their writing competence.

Despite these challenges, students also showed strong motivation to learn academic writing. Participants reported that they were motivated by future career goals, thesis preparation, good grades, and the desire to improve their English proficiency. This finding aligns with Dörnyei & Ushioda (2021), who argued that learner motivation is strengthened when students see clear personal and academic value in learning tasks. In addition, Lamb, (2017) found that students become more persistent when language learning is connected to future identity and success. In this study, academic writing was viewed not only as a course requirement but also as a useful skill for future academic and professional needs.

Another important finding concerns the influence of teaching methods on students' attitudes. Participants responded positively to clear explanations, examples, group discussions, interactive activities, lecturer feedback, and the use of technology. This indicates that instructional practices strongly shape how students experience writing courses. Farahian & Avarzamani (2018) argued that effective writing teachers should provide clear models, supportive feedback, and opportunities for revision to help students improve their academic writing performance. (Lee, 2020) found that student-centered writing classrooms help reduce anxiety and increase engagement. In the current study, students felt more confident when lecturers explained tasks clearly and provided constructive responses to their writing.

Technology also played a positive role in shaping students' attitudes. Some participants mentioned using digital tools such as Grammarly and online resources to improve grammar and revise drafts. This finding supports recent studies showing that technology can increase learner autonomy and confidence in writing. Al-Inbari & Al-Wasy, (2023) found that automated writing tools help students notice grammar errors and improve writing accuracy. Similarly, Li & Zhang (2023) reported that collaborative writing environments can make writing instruction more interactive, motivating, and supportive of learner engagement. However, technology should be used as supplementary support rather than a replacement for

teacher guidance, especially in areas such as idea development and critical argumentation.

The study further found that students actively used learning strategies to improve their writing, including regular practice, reading journal articles, outlining ideas, revising drafts, and applying lecturer feedback. These findings reflect the importance of self-regulated learning in academic writing. Guo et al. (2021) explained that process-based instruction encourages students to plan, monitor, and evaluate their writing process strategically. Self-regulated writing strategies positively influence writing performance and learner confidence. In this study, students who practiced consistently and revised carefully demonstrated greater responsibility for their own learning progress.

Zhang & Dong (2022) stated that motivational regulation and self-regulated writing strategies play an important role in supporting students' persistence and engagement in writing tasks. Therefore, teachers should interpret anxiety as a signal for better support rather than a lack of motivation. Positive attitudes can be strengthened when students receive clear guidance, supportive feedback, meaningful tasks, and opportunities to improve progressively. Graham & Perin (2016) Also highlighted that effective writing instruction should include explicit teaching of writing processes such as planning, drafting, and revising to improve student performance. In addition, Hyland (2019) stressed that feedback plays a crucial role in helping learners refine their writing and develop greater accuracy and coherence over time.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of data analyses, it can be inferred that students' attitudes toward learning an Academic Writing course are complex and multidimensional. Although students recognized academic writing as an essential skill for higher education, they also experienced difficulties related to grammar, vocabulary, organization, coherence, citation, and plagiarism. In addition, emotional factors such as anxiety, stress, and lack of confidence influenced their learning experiences. However, students were motivated to learn academic writing because of academic goals, future career preparation, thesis writing needs, and personal language development.

Positive teaching practices; clear explanations, interactive classroom activities, constructive feedback, and technology integration, significantly improve students' engagement and confidence. Students also demonstrated active efforts to improve their writing through self-regulated strategies.

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