Challenges in mastering academic writing: a case study of English language learners at the University for Business and Technology

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Abstract: This research investigates the problems students of the English Language Faculty at the University for Business and Technology face and proposes certain remedies for academic writing. The paper will try to identify the areas in academic writing that are problematic and detect whether the current strategies of instruction are workable or not and, thus, whether specific improvements are needed. It tries to analyze, namely, the issues EFL students encounter with the writing process, language proficiency, and integration of critical thinking and research during three academic years. In this light, a combination of two methods has been applied for a comprehensive assessment. Data collection is done through the administration of questionnaires to 60 students in their first, second, and third-year levels in the English Language Program. The questionnaire probes into information on the experiences and perceptions of the students concerning their difficulties in academic writing. It also consists of the collection of qualitative data by interviewing six professors of the English Language at UBT about their perceptions of teaching difficulties and the efficiency of currently applied pedagogical approaches. Geographically, the scope of the study is UBT; it will exclusively consider the English Language Program and its related teaching methodologies. Preliminary findings reveal that academic writing does pose numerous problems: in language proficiency, integration of critical thinking, and efficiency through current teaching methodology. The students point to their difficulty in the development of academic writing competencies, while professors emphasize weaknesses in instructional strategies that impede the student's progress. This study, therefore, recommends corrective development in teaching methods and support structures to impact the academic writing competence of EFL students at UBT. Areas have been identified in which current practice is failing, together with recommendations of ways in which instructional methods might be refined. These findings from the research provide the necessary insight for educators here at UBT in terms of teaching methodology and support mechanisms. Addressing identified issues and incorporating proposed improvements will go a long way toward enhancing EFL students' overall academic writing skills for improving their academic standing and enhancing their learning experiences.

Keywords: Academic writing, English as a foreign language (EFL), Instructional strategies, Language proficiency, Pedagogical practices, Student challenges, Writing skills.

1. Introduction

1.1. Context and Background

Proficiency in academic writing is important for students, especially for those who are studying English as a foreign language (EFL), as they undergo different challenges in order to gain writing proficiency [1]. The University for Business and Technology provides an organized three-year English program designed to prepare students for all kinds of linguistic needs. This curriculum not only emphasizes key skills like speaking and listening but also teaches advanced academic writing skills that are necessary for research papers, essays, and projects [2]. Academic writing proficiency is a difficult task that involves a wide range of skills, including text interpretation, content analysis, and draft refining through several revisions [3]. Previous studies on academic writing have highlighted the difficulties involved and the challenges that EFL students experience in this environment [4]. This is

often viewed as the most difficult skill to acquire in an academic context due to the important role it plays in requiring one to reach high levels of critical thinking and organization [5]. Much research has echoed a similar sentiment that writing skills are strong determinants of increased respect and success academically [6]. Research has revealed several frequent problems, including poor language skills, a lack of writing practice, and a lack of feedback [7]. Pedagogical techniques play an important role in students' writing development [8]. Despite these findings, it is still unclear how certain teaching techniques influence the development of academic writing skills over time [9]. This study attempts to bridge the gap between the challenges that students confront at UBT and the impact of current solutions that are being implemented immediately.

1.2. Aims and Objectives
The study aims:
- To explore and identify the problematic areas in academic writing that affect the English Language Faculty students at the University of Business and Technology (UBT) [10].
- To identify and analyze systematically, over three academic years, the problems EFL students face with the writing process, their language proficiency, and the integration of critical thinking and research [11].
- To assess whether or not the existing instructional strategies and pedagogical practices help the students in developing their skills in academic writing [12]. Investigate how current teaching methods promote the ability of students to write high-quality academic texts [13].
- To formulate and suggest targeted improvements in teaching methodologies and supporting systems with respect to the problems identified above. This will help improve the overall academic writing proficiency of EFL students at UBT [14].

1.3. Scope
The scope of this research is based on the English Language Program at the University for Business and Technology, specifically targeting and discussing the analysis of students in their first, second, and third years in the program. The research is delimited only to the following areas:

1. The focus of the research is the students' experience and perception regarding the challenge of academic writing, which was done through survey questionnaires that formed data from a sample size of 60 students across different academic levels.

2. The current teaching practices and how these impact skills development in academic writing

3. The research is geographically scoped to the University of Business and Technology and does not cover other tertiary institutions or more diverse contexts

1.4. Research Questions
Based on the objective outlined for this research, attempt to find out the following:

1. The main critical factors that can challenge UBT students while striving to acquire proficient academic writing skills during the first, second, and third years of studying at the English Language Program?

2. In what ways the implemented instructional methods combined with pedagogical practices of teaching in the English Language Program, characterized by a respectively balanced teaching and learning approach, impact students' development in the realm of academic writing skills?

3. What are the students' and instructors' perceptions of the existing methods of teaching students to acquire academic writing skills?

4. What suggestions can be given as part of the teaching methodologies and support system to enhance academic writing output for the EFL learners studying at UBT?

1.5. Data Collection

This study carries a dual-method approach to ensure a holistic assessment. To begin with, the researcher will administer a questionnaire to a sample of 60 students from the English Language Program employed at the University for Business and Technology (UBT) over three academic years. These questioners aim at gathering more in-depth insights into how the students are experiencing and what difficulties they have in academic writing. There will also be interviewed six English Language professors at UBT. The questions will try to bring out the problems they experience while teaching academic writing, and they will also be used in evaluating the efficiency of the current pedagogical approaches. Participants Two main groups of participants will be involved in the study. The first group comprises 60 students in the UBT English Language Education Department, divided into first, second, and third-year students. The second group is composed of six UBT professors in the field of the English Language, who are going to enhance the research with potential issues of difficulty in offering their perspectives on how effective the proposed strategies are from a teaching perspective. This paper will analyze the problems students had with academic writing in the program and what lectures were given regarding the problem to advance instructional design technology.

2. Literature Review

A literature review would critically assess sources and views that would help present wide coverage on the topics of academic writing and constructivist theory. With this view, the literature review is purposed to critically analyze recent research and theoretical points of view pertaining to the difficulties and solutions identified with academic writing, together with an examination of how constructivist practices might further raise academic attainment.

2.1. Introduction to Academic Writing

One of the sophisticated abilities necessary for an undergraduate student to succeed at postsecondary education is academic writing. It is not only a matter of grammar correctness; it also requires many other skills to be present, such as the ability to make cogent arguments, participate in scholarly discussions, and adhere to some structural guidelines. Academic writing is structured and formal writing used in scholarship and is characterized by clarity, precise language, and proper adherence to the relevant conventions in writing [4]. Reports highlight that academic writing is of great importance as it allows for the dissemination of research findings, development of knowledge, and fosters critical thinking among students [5]. It thus becomes an essential part of evaluation in academics and professional growth [6].

2.2. Structure and Characteristics of Academic Writing

To effectively structure your writing, certain structural components are necessary. Academic writing is organized to achieve clarity and effective communication through setting up the research context, articulating the question or thesis being researched, and providing a roadmap for the organization of the paper [7]. Argument detail is then developed in the body text through evidence, analysis, and discussion, which is organized into logically coherent paragraphs [8]. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the findings, reinforces the importance of the research, and indicates possible areas for future research [9]. For clarity and precision, academic writing requires clear and unambiguous expressions [10]. It should account for coherence and cohesion through the smooth flow of ideas, and there should be no breaks in sentence and paragraph connections [11]. Additionally, proper referencing and citation are necessary to acknowledge the source of the information and avoid plagiarism [12].

2.3. Challenges and Strategies for Improvement in Academic Writing

Some common issues related to academic writing include language ability, especially for non-native English speakers, which can impact their writing and overall performance [13]. Another important

issue is writing skills; many students experience problems with argument structuring and coherence maintenance, leading to papers that lack clarity and logical flow [14]. Furthermore, insufficient feedback and limited time for revision are problems that affect students' ability to produce well-polished academic writing [15]. Process-oriented approaches, which detail the stages of writing—planning, drafting, and revising—are critical for the systematic development of writing skills [16]. Scaffolding, involving structured support and targeted feedback, helps students master academic writing [17]. Peer review procedures also provide valuable feedback and help students develop their critical evaluation skills [18].

2.4. Constructivist Approaches in Writing Pedagogy

Lev Vygotsky's social constructivism theory emphasizes dyadic social interaction and cultural influence in learning [19]. This theory supports the need for scaffolding and guided practice in writing. Scaffolding, a key application of social constructivist principles, involves providing temporary guidance and support that is gradually withdrawn as students become more skilled [20]. Constructivist strategies, including active and collaborative learning, foster deeper writing skills and understanding. At Delta State University, constructivist principles are applied through increasingly demanding writing classes, offering scaffolded learning experiences [21]. Successful teaching strategies build on these principles, maximizing student involvement and fostering self-directed learning to improve the quality of academic writing instruction [22].

3. Research Methodology

Employing a range of methodological structures that combine quantitative and qualitative techniques, this study explores deeply into all of the academic writing challenges faced by students enrolled at the University for Business and Technology (UBT) in the English Language Program. Through the use of a combination of methods, the research seeks to provide a detailed understanding of the difficulties and effectiveness of teaching strategies from multiple perspectives.

3.1. Participants

Sixty students from UBT's English Language Program will be included in a selective selection process to guarantee participation at the first, second, and third year levels. The goal of this selection is to provide a cross-sectional overview of the experiences that students have had during their academic careers.

3.2. Instruments

A custom-designed survey is created only for this research. This tool will use a number of question forms, including Likert scales, multiple-choice questions, and open-ended questions, to completely analyze students' challenges, their views on available support, and the effectiveness of present teaching approaches.

3.3. Procedure

To increase participation, the survey is presented in-person with printed copies. Teachers will be contacted in a blended or face-to-face format, depending on their availability. This strategy allows for direct involvement and immediate data gathering, which improves the accuracy and completeness of responses.

3.4. Qualitative Data Collection

Six faculty members with substantial expertise in teaching academic writing will be selected for in-depth interviews. These professors will be chosen based on their prior experience and involvement in curriculum development. To explore professors' perspectives, a semi-structured interview guide is

developed. The goal of the guide is to elicit in-depth, comprehensive feedback regarding teaching problems, teaching strategies, and how they affect students' writing competency.

Depending on participant availability, interviews may involve face-to-face or blended interactions as well as virtual encounters. This adaptive strategy guarantees all-encompassing participation and adapts to various timetable requirements.

3.5. Sampling Strategy

To establish a sample that is accurate, the method of stratified random sampling will be used, assuring proportional representation from each academic year of the program. This technique will provide a thorough view of the writing issues encountered at different stages of the students' educational journey. Furthermore, a selective sampling technique will be used to locate faculty members with considerable knowledge and a thorough comprehension of academic writing education. This focused selection will provide significant and informed insights into the pedagogical approaches and challenges of teaching academic writing.

3.6. Data Analysis

In order to guarantee an adequate understanding of the academic writing difficulties encountered by students in the University for Business and Technology (UBT) English Language Program, the data collection for this study was carefully planned. A structured questionnaire is given to a sample of sixty students over the course of three academic years in order to collect quantitative data. Because the interviews were semi-structured, both specific and open-ended answers were permitted. The results revealed important themes that reflects professors' opinions on resource requirements, instructional approaches, assignment clarity, and the efficacy of feedback. The survey is given out in person during scheduled class periods and consisted of multiple-choice, open-ended, and Likert scale questions.
The several question formats made it possible to gather in-depth answers regarding:
- Students' perceptions of their challenges with academic writing.
- Their opinions regarding the suitability of instructional support.
- The efficiency of the methods of instruction used today.

The survey was physically administered, which encouraged direct interaction and gave students a chance to ask questions and get their questions answered, which enhanced the level of quality and thoroughness of the responses.

Comprehensive interviews were carried out with six faculty members who possess significant expertise in instructing academic writing, apart from the student survey. The purpose of these interviews was to get a qualitative understanding of the following topics:
- The difficulties in providing efficient writing education; and
- The perceived efficacy of the teaching methods used at the moment.
- Suggestions for enhancing teaching methods.

In order to provide a deeper examination of the faculty members' viewpoints and experiences, the interviews were also done in a hybrid style.

3.7. Limitations

The results' relevance to other educational situations or institutions may be limited by the study's concentration on UBT's English Language Program. Using self-reported information from interviews and surveys carries the risk of introducing biases and compromising the validity of the results.

4. Findings

These data present the findings of students' questionnaire responses and their assessments of the difficulties and resources associated with academic writing as well as findings from interviews with University for Business and Technology (UBT)professors regarding their experiences and viewpoints

on academic writing instruction, as well as the results We can make inferences regarding the efficacy of the present support and instructional approaches based on these findings.

4.1. Students Questionnaire Data Analysis

Table 1.
Background Information
Section 1: Background Information

Question	Option	Frequency
What year are you currently in at the University for Business and Technology?	First year	20
	Second year	20
	Third year	20
How often do you engage in academic writing tasks (e.g., essays, reports, research papers)?	Weekly	15
	Monthly	25
	Rarely	15
	Never	5

The results from table 1 show that the majority, 53.3 %, indicated engaging in academic writing tasks either monthly or weekly, which means that writing is a regular factor in their academic life. A small proportion reported engaging in writing tasks either rarely or never, which could suggest variations in course requirements or personal academic focus. It is such equal weighting of responses across the different academic years that can guarantee a sample able to provide a balanced view about analyzing how writing tasks might impact or vary at different stages of students' academic careers.

Table 2.
Challenges in academic writing.
Section 2: Challenges in Academic Writing

Challenge	Not at All (1)	Slightly (2)	Moderately (3)	Very (4)	Extremely Difficult (5)	Average Score
Understanding assignment requirements	5	10	20	15	10	3.05
Developing a clear thesis statement	3	8	22	18	9	3.28
Structuring your arguments coherently	2	12	18	20	8	3.30
Using appropriate academic sources	4	10	19	17	10	3.23
Providing proper citations and references	6	14	15	18	7	3.15

The average score of 3.05 indicates that, on average, assignment requirements are considered a moderate challenge related to understanding. Some do find it a very large struggle, but the distribution varies from a slight struggle up to moderate difficulty. It's a common area of issue but not in the most severe categories for practical challenges and strategies in teaching writing [24], or according to Vygotsky (1978) for developmental aspects [22].

With the mean of 3.28, the overall trend says that clear thesis statements are rated as more of a moderate to slightly higher challenge for students than understanding the details of the assignment. The fact that this task receives a higher mean, in turn, means that students find it at least somewhat difficult more often than not; this clearly reflects the importance and challenge it poses in academic writing.

The most challenging part of academic writing is perceived to be the structuring of arguments coherently, reported to have the highest average score of 3.30. This suggests that students find it particularly problematic to clearly and logically structure arguments.

Using appropriate academic sources was a moderate challenge, scoring an average of 3.23. The distribution shows that while for many students this task is not terribly challenging, still, as a result, there are quite a few of them who did not consider it too easy, though they nevertheless found it easier compared to structuring arguments.

This is further evidenced by the fact that, on average, proper citation and referencing receive a score of 3.15 and are therefore also considered a challenge that stands at a middling level. It is on average a bit less difficult than structuring arguments and developing a thesis statement but stands out as a major challenge.

In summary, the most challenging aspect perceived of academic writing is that which deals with the coherent structuring of arguments with the highest mean score. Understanding the assignment requirements, and providing proper citations and references are the least challenging but still causing moderate difficulties to students. Students in general report to have moderate difficulties in these different aspects of academic writing; however, some areas, such as thesis development and argument structuring, were rated to be a little more challenging.

Table 3.
Perception of support.
Section 3: Perceptions of Support

Type of Support	Very dissatisfied (1)	Dissatisfied (2)	Neutral (3)	Satisfied (4)	Very satisfied (5)	Average score
Feedback from instructors	5	15	20	15	5	3.00
Writing workshops and seminars	8	12	20	15	5	2.90
Access to writing resources (e.g., online tools, libraries)	3	10	22	20	5	3.20
Peer review sessions	4	8	18	22	8	3.22

Which of the following support services have you found most helpful? (Select all that apply)	Frequency
One-on-one meetings with instructors	35
Writing center consultations	25
Online writing resources	30
Peer review groups	20
Workshops and seminars	15
Other (please specify): _____	5

By this description in the table, we would like to cite Hyland (2009) on academic discourse and support structures [26] as we are able to get the idea of how a student sees every offered support

service and which kind of support is good enough and which one needs reconsideration within the university. Therefore, professors' feedback has the mean score of 3.00, thus signifying that generally, students are neutral to slightly satisfied. While some of the students are happy, there is a noticeable proportion that is either dissatisfied or feeling neutral about the kind of feedback received.

Workshops and seminars had the lowest score on average, culminating toward a more dissatisfied or even neutral perception of these offerings compared to the others. That is, writing workshops are not so much valuable or potent. Access to writing resources averages 3.20 where channeled uptake was perceived more positively than in other kinds. The students find these resources useful albeit the enhancement level still suffers from deficit.

The peer review sessions have the highest average score of 3.22, meaning students tend to see the most supportive type of support as support provided by peers. It follows students' appreciation and the perceived value of peer feedback.

Most Helpful Support Services, as identified by a total of 35 students, is the support service in which they see it as most helpful. This seems to suggest that students appreciate more personalized, face-to-face interaction with instructors. This is closely followed by digital tools and resources, which are considered equally helpful, again resonating positively with the perception of access to resources on the writing resources table. Five students fewer, or 25 in all, find writing center consultations helpful*; this shows over a fifth of the cohort favoring structured, expert support. A further 20 students selected peer review sessions as helpful—again positively resonating with perceptions of peer review sessions. Selected by 15 students, it would be concluded that while these are somewhat helpful, they are not as popular as other forms of support. 5 students provided other forms, meaning that these number of additional forms might exist even if they are not that popular. The areas people have looked most positively in terms of perceived effectiveness are the peer review sessions and access to writing resources. Some areas for improvements are related to the Feedback from the professors is the lowest among other equally important areas.Further, the lowest average satisfaction scores are found for the writing workshops and seminars that the improvements in these areas may give the fillip to the overall support.

Support services and other one-to-one meetings with lecturers were the preferred support service for the majority of students considered invaluable, showing that students prefer personalized—on demand—ease of access support.

Table 4.
Effectiveness of instructional practices.
Section 4: Effectiveness of Instructional Practices

Instructional Practice	Not effective (1)	Slightly effective (2)	Moderately effective (3)	Effective (4)	Very effective (5)	Average score
Clear explanations of writing assignments	4	12	18	20	6	3.18
Structured writing guides and templates	5	10	22	18	5	3.05
Regular revision and feedback cycles	3	8	19	24	6	3.27
Integration of writing exercises into the curriculum	6	10	21	17	6	3.07

When discussing instructional practices, Harris (1998) gives us a practical guidance on teaching [24], the same as Hayes & Flower (1981) for insights into writing processes and feedback [23].

Effectiveness of Instructional Practices will help us understand which instructional practices are considered to be most effective for students and which ones need refinement. Then, by knowing what the above instructional practices are considered least effective, it will allow us to fine-tune some educative strategies in order to further support students in writing development.

The overall response to clear assignment explanations of writing is 3.18, hence rated as moderately effective. The majority of students reported the practice as effective or at least moderately so; it is generally useful, even if there is much scope for improvement.

Finally, structured writing guides and templates bring out the lowest average score at 3.05, indicating some perception of being less effective. Many students found this resource at least of some help, though there was a notable proportion who felt this resource was of lesser impact.

Of all of the practices, regular revision and feedback cycles ranked the highest in terms of average score at 3.27, indicating that students considered the practice to be of medium-to-high effectiveness. This mirrors the high percentage of students reporting this practice as effective in improving writing skills, thus reflecting its importance.

Finally, the incorporation of writing exercises into the curriculum averaged 3.07, indicating that, on average, this practice is at least considered to be moderately effective, though it helps many students; however, there is some variability regarding its perceived effectiveness.

In summary, we find that regular revision and feedback cycles are ranked as the most effective instructional practice since they have returned the highest average score. This shows students appreciate being continually assessed as they are given a chance to revise their work. On the other side, structured writing guides and templates are ranked as least effective, as they received the lowest average score, thus partially meeting students' needs or expectations. Explanations of writing assignments and integration of writing exercises into the curriculum also seem to have a moderate effect. Again, the trend seems to be that practices which provide iterative feedback and clear guidance are helpful.

Table 5.
Additional comments.

Section 5: Additional Comments
Additional comments or suggestions
More frequent feedback would be helpful.
Include more interactive workshops.
Improve access to online resources.
Peer reviews should be better structured.
Additional one-on-one sessions are needed.

These additional comments also offer insights into aspects in which students feel improvements could be made, illuminating the areas to enhance in the writing support services and instructional practices.

Students note in relation to "More frequent feedback would be helpful", in that this observation indicates that students might derive more benefit if they were given feedback on their writing more frequently. This means that frequent and regular feedback is important for students to develop their writing skills, so they also understand what progress they are making in their subject area. In this respect, such a view coincides with the favorable attitude shown by stakeholders to continuous cycles of review and feedback in Section 4, wherein increasing the frequency of feedback might positively add to its effect.

The call for more interaction in workshops signals the desire for more active and engaging learning. Student comments suggest that the workshops currently are too passive or lack engagement, and thus progress could be made through greater interactivity. This may relate most to the relatively lower satisfaction scores seen for workshops and seminars in Section 3.

This is characteristic of enhancing access to online resources; that is, learners desire improved or an increased supply of digital tools and materials that support writing. The salience of this comment, then, is on the place of available, quality online resources. The relative positive approach to access writing resources considered by the learners has been noted in Section 3.

This implies that the peer review sessions really lack some form of organization and guidance. The more structured the review, the more constructive the peers in giving feedback and consequently better learning. This recommendation corresponds with the positive yet mixed feeling towards peer review sessions in Section 3, implying that better structure might enhance their effectiveness.

Indications are that personal attention, direct one on one situation with instructors is one of the strongest demands. This concurs with the high frequency with which students find one on one meeting with Instructors most helpful in section 3. More of these sessions could be provided which will provide more customized support and could address specific needs of the individual student.

To conclude the responses from the Student Questionnaire some point needs to be considered :

- Students want more feedback, frequently, and more specifically guided.
- Student want to improve the mode in which the workshop is held, to more interactive and engaging.
- Students need better access to online resources and also structured peer reviews.
- More one-to-one sessions need to be given, and the same was also found to be helpful.
- Allow for extra, more spontaneous, in-between feedback mechanisms.
- More effective, engaging and more structure in peer reviews.
- Invest time and resources in improving the quality and accessibility of web-based writing resources.
- Implement more effective guidelines for conducting peer review sessions.
- Increase the frequency of opportunities to meet one-on-one with mentors/staff so that students can foster a one-to-one relationship.

4.2. Teacher Interview Data Analysis

The purpose of this study is to explore the challenges faced by teachers in providing effective academic writing instruction and support at the University for Business and Technology (UBT). This analysis includes insights into assignment clarity, feedback mechanisms, instructional practices, and resources and training needs.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six faculty members across various departments. The interviews were designed to capture insights on assignment requirements, feedback practices, instructional effectiveness, and resource needs.

4.3. Presentation of Findings
4.3.1. Demographics of Interviewees

Table 6.
Demographics of Interviewees.

Attribute people	Category enhanced	Frequency level
Number of participants	Number of teachers interviewed	6
Departments	one	English language
Experience level	5-10 years, 10+ years	4/6, 2/6

The table on the demographics of interviewees provides an overview of the attributes of the six teachers who participated in the interviews. All participants were from the English Language department, ensuring a focus on academic writing within this specific field. The experience levels of the teachers varied, with the majority (4 out of 6) having 5 to 10 years of teaching experience, while 2 out of

6 had over 10 years of experience. This distribution offers a balanced perspective from both relatively seasoned educators and those with extensive teaching backgrounds, providing a comprehensive view of academic writing instruction and support within the department.

4.3.2. Clarity of Assignment Requirements

Table 7.
Clarity of assignment requirements.

Challenges faced	Given description	Frequency level
Vague instructions	Ambiguous assignment details causing confusion	4/6
Insufficient examples	Lack of examples provided	3/6
Unclear expectations	Uncertainty about assignment goals	5/6

For issues like vague instructions, McCarthy (2006) for grammar and clarity in writing [21], or Hyland (2004) for disciplinary discourse [27] gives us a practical guide. Table 7 outlines the challenges related to the clarity of assignment requirements as reported by the interviewed teachers. The most frequently cited issue is "Unclear Expectations," with 5 out of 6 teachers noting that uncertainty about assignment goals is a significant problem. This suggests that students often struggle to understand what is expected of them, leading to potential misalignment with academic standards. "Vague Instructions" is another notable concern, mentioned by 4 out of 6 teachers, indicating that ambiguous details in assignments contribute to confusion among students. Additionally, "Insufficient Examples," cited by 3 out of 6 teachers, highlights a lack of illustrative examples that could aid students in grasping assignment requirements more effectively. These challenges collectively point to a need for more explicit, detailed, and well-supported assignment guidelines to enhance students' understanding and performance.

4.3.3. Effectiveness of Feedback

Table 7.
Effectiveness of feedback components.

Feedback aspect components	Feedback description	Frequency level
Timeliness	Feedback given in a timely manner	5/6
Detail Level	Level of detail in feedback provided	4/6
Impact on Student Improvement	Effectiveness in enhancing writing skills	4/6

Table 8 presents an analysis of the effectiveness of feedback components as reported by the teachers. The majority of teachers (5 out of 6) emphasize "Timeliness" as a critical aspect, suggesting that feedback is generally provided promptly. However, concerns about the "Detail Level" of feedback are also prevalent, with 4 out of 6 teachers noting that the feedback provided often lacks sufficient detail. This indicates that while feedback may be timely, it may not always offer comprehensive guidance needed for substantial improvement. Additionally, "Impact on Student Improvement" is another area of focus, with 4 out of 6 teachers highlighting that feedback is effective in enhancing students' writing skills. This suggests that although feedback is delivered on time and has a positive impact, there is room for improvement in the depth and specificity of the feedback provided to better support student development. Overall, Kellogg (2003) for psychological aspects of feedback and writing [28], states that while timely feedback is a strength, increasing the detail and specificity of feedback could further enhance its effectiveness in improving student writing.

Table 8.
Perceived effectiveness of instructional practices.

Practice used	Effectiveness results	Challenges faced	Frequency level
Peer Reviews	Effective	Poorly structured	3/6
Revision Cycles	Highly Effective	Time constraints	4/6
Structured Guides	Moderately Effective	Too rigid	3/6

4.3.4. Instructional Practices

Table 9 summarizes the perceived effectiveness of various instructional practices and the challenges associated with each, based on teacher feedback.

Peer Reviews are generally regarded as effective by 3 out of 6 teachers; however, they are noted to be "Poorly Structured," indicating that while peer reviews are beneficial, their effectiveness is hampered by a lack of organization and clear guidelines.

Revision Cycles receive the highest praise, with 4 out of 6 teachers considering them "Highly Effective." These cycles are valued for their substantial role in improving students' writing skills. However, the challenge noted is "Time Constraints," suggesting that the effectiveness of revision cycles might be limited by the time available for both students and instructors to engage in thorough revision processes.

Structured Guides are seen as "Moderately Effective" by 3 out of 6 teachers. While they provide useful support, they are perceived as "Too Rigid," which can limit their flexibility and adaptability to individual students' needs.

These practices are best described by Hyland (2004) for academic writing practices [27], and Harris (1998) for practical teaching strategies [24].To conclude, while revision cycles are highlighted as a particularly effective practice, there are notable challenges with peer reviews and structured guides that need addressing to enhance their overall effectiveness in the instructional process.

4.3.5. Resources and Training Needs

Table 9.
Resources and training needs.

Resource or training needed	Need assessment	Frequency level
Interactive online tools	High	5/6
Updated teaching materials	Moderate	4/6
Professional development workshops	High	4/6

The data highlights a clear demand for enhancing the educational framework through a blend of technological integration and educator development. Interactive online tools emerge as a critical resource, marked by a high need and frequent usage in educational sessions. This trend underscores a shift towards more digitally enriched learning environments that prioritize student engagement and interactivity. Meanwhile, updated teaching materials maintain a moderate but consistent presence, suggesting that while these materials are foundational, the primary focus leans towards innovative approaches and technological tools. High-priority professional development workshops reflect a strong commitment to continuous improvement among educators. These workshops are pivotal in equipping teachers with the latest teaching methodologies and technologies, thereby fostering a culture of lifelong learning and adaptability. Overall, the data illustrates a strategic emphasis on blending traditional and modern educational resources to maximize learning outcomes.

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the multifaceted challenges that teachers at the University for Business and Technology (UBT) encounter in delivering effective academic writing instruction.

Through semi-structured interviews with faculty members, key issues such as unclear assignment requirements, the effectiveness of feedback, instructional practices, and the need for resources and training have been identified. Notably, the findings indicate a significant concern regarding the clarity of assignment expectations, which often leads to student confusion and misalignment with academic standards. While timely feedback is recognized as a strength, the depth and specificity of this feedback require enhancement to better support student development.

Moreover, the analysis reveals that while certain instructional practices, such as revision cycles, are highly effective, challenges related to peer reviews and structured guides persist. The demand for resources, particularly interactive online tools and professional development workshops, underscores a need for ongoing investment in educator training and technological integration. Overall, addressing these challenges through clear communication, improved feedback mechanisms, and targeted professional development will be essential in fostering a more effective academic writing environment at UBT, ultimately enhancing student learning outcomes and academic success.

The findings indicate that while there are areas of strength, such as the perceived effectiveness of peer review sessions and access to writing resources, there are also notable areas for improvement. Structuring arguments coherently and developing a clear thesis statement are major challenges for students, highlighting where additional support may be needed. Enhancements in feedback frequency, workshop interactivity, and personalized support could significantly improve students' academic writing experiences and outcomes.

5. Discussion

The findings of the study reveal a thorough analysis of the problems the students of the English Language Program face at UBT in relation to academic writing, which in turn propels the correct kind of attention toward the justifiable interventions that could develop the writing skills of the students and eventually make students' writing at par with the expectations regarding academic standards.

5.1. Challenges in Understanding Assignment Requirements

The results display the difficulty in understanding the requirements of the tasks taking a mean of 3.05, which is to mean that the students find it moderately hard. This is a huge concern and indicates that the current assessment briefs and instructions are not clear. Proper communication from the professors is to be implemented to prevent any confusion and to ensure that the students are on the same page in what is expected out of them in the assessments.

5.1.1. Recommendations:

More specific explanations and more detailed assignment descriptions by the professors with given examples and guidelines will better state what is expected.

Workshops regularly included can be carried and organized to make the students understand what is expected of them and how to present their work by presenting it appropriately.

5.2. Difficulty in Structuring Arguments Coherently

The highest average score for difficulty in logically structuring arguments was 3.30. Most of them opined this as problematic for them to coherently structure arguments. This may prove a lack of skills or strategies in these students for ordering and presenting their argumentation logically.

5.2.1. Recommendations:

Integrating targeted training on constructing and sequencing arguments within the curriculum can address this issue. Providing students with structured outlines and practice exercises can help them develop a more logical flow in their writing. Enhanced peer review sessions that focus on the organization of arguments could also provide students with valuable feedback on their writing structure.

5.3. Challenges in Selecting and Integrating Academic Sources

The moderate difficulty students experience with selecting and integrating academic sources (average score of 3.23) points to a need for improved research skills. Students appear to struggle with evaluating and incorporating sources effectively into their writing.

5.3.1. Recommendations:

Offering comprehensive training in research methods and source evaluation can help students improve their ability to select and integrate appropriate sources. Workshops focusing on research strategies and the use of academic databases can further enhance students' research skills.

5.4. Issues with Proper Citation Practices

The average score of 3.15 regarding citation practices suggests that students face challenges in applying proper citation styles, which is crucial for maintaining academic integrity.

5.4.1. Recommendations:

Providing additional support in understanding and applying various citation styles is necessary. This could include creating detailed citation guides and offering citation workshops. Implementing interactive tools and software that assist with citation management could also be beneficial.

5.5. Broader Implications and Suggestions for Improvement

The study's findings indicate a clear need for improved instructional strategies and support mechanisms to address the identified challenges. These improvements should focus on:

Revising the curriculum to include more focused training on assignment interpretation, argument structuring, research skills, and citation practices.

Ensuring that instructors are trained to provide clear, detailed feedback and to offer effective guidance on academic writing tasks.

Enhancing support services, such as writing centers and online resources, to provide students with additional help in overcoming these challenges.

By addressing these areas, we believe that students ultimately will enhance their academic writing skills and thrive on overall academic performance.

6. Conclusion

This study has explored the multifaceted challenges faced by students in the English Language Program at the University for Business and Technology (UBT) regarding academic writing. Through a detailed survey and interviews with both students and instructors, we have identified several key areas of difficulty and assessed the effectiveness of current instructional practices.

The findings reveal that students encounter significant obstacles across all academic years, including issues with understanding assignment requirements, developing coherent arguments, and adhering to research and citation standards. Despite the critical role of academic writing in their overall academic success, many students struggle with language proficiency, structural organization, and iterative revision processes.

Instructional strategies and support mechanisms currently in place at UBT show varying degrees of effectiveness. While some students benefit from existing resources and feedback opportunities, others find these supports insufficient or unclear. This discrepancy highlights the need for a more comprehensive and targeted approach to teaching academic writing.

In light of these findings, several recommendations have been proposed to address the identified challenges. These include enhancing the clarity of assignment guidelines, improving training in thesis development and citation practices, revising writing workshops, and increasing the frequency and quality of feedback. Additionally, fostering a collaborative learning environment and integrating scaffolding techniques can further support student development.

According to the results, some of the recommendations proposed are clearer parameters for assignments, training in the design of theses and citation norms, reformulation of writing workshops, and more frequency and quality of feedback. More assistance in student development would be better integration of scaffolding through the provision of a learning community.

The major point that emanates from this study is the need for continuous assessment and adjustment in teaching methods for more optimal execution. If these recommendations are implemented at UBT, the teaching practices will become enriched, and more effective support will be provided to enhance academic writing proficiency that will, in turn, work towards enhancing student success. These findings constitute an important basis for further improvement of pedagogical practices in enhancing the quality of academic writing instruction within the UBT English Language Program.

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