

CHALLENGES IN WRITING ACADEMIC PAPERS FOR INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATION AMONG INDONESIAN GRADUATES STUDENTS

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Abstract: The aims of this study are to investigate the problems and challenges of university students in writing English scholarly article for an international journal and to elaborate their perceptions toward the importance of writing for the publication. Furthermore, it also explores the certain needs to support their skills in the process of writing the article. The investigation involves 20 students from one of the universities in Indonesia. It uses a questionnaire consisted of 24 items to understand the students' problems and perceptions of the issues in relation to writing for the academic publication in English. The findings of this study indicate that claiming knowledge was the most difficult aspect in writing the article. On the other hand, students agree that writing for international publication is considered as a crucial action in academic field, and henceforth, they needs to have university's support to prepare students' writing. Finally, some suggestions related to students' problem in writing for international publication are offered.

Keywords: Graduate students, students' challenges, students' writing, international publication

INTRODUCTION

In some universities in Indonesia, the students are assigned to publish a sholarly article to accomplish their degree. Thus, students must have a good understanding and adequate knowledge with a large number of scientific publications such as books, research articles, and academic journals. They must learn that writing for

publication is a different skill than writing a good course paper (Nolan & Rocco, 2009). Therefore, academic journals can be called as 'chat rooms' as the space to explore a lot of ideas, opinions, and knowledge in academic words in which this becomes a reason for the scientific community to find that academic journal began its important role in the eighteenth century (Boden, Epstein & Kenway, 2005). Moreover, Casanave & Vandrick (2008) stated that academic publications are becoming important for those in language education to write for research article with the purposes of securing or keeping an academic position. In fact, they might not have been experienced in writing and publishing their own research articles due to lack of English writing skills to make the proper outcome in well-established journals (Moldovan, 2011).

Dyson and Freedman (as cited in Sharp, 2016) stated that writing is considered to be the process of development. In another word, writing is conveying information or expression of original ideas in a consecutive way in the new language. Brown (2001) claimed that writing is a thinking process. He also stated that you can plan the concept of writing and give it an unlimited number of revisions before publish. Furthermore, in high level education, students are required to draw on particular work and adopt the patterns and genres of academic discourse in their writing tasks (Tardy, 2010). He added that academic writing often requires scholars to construct an idea from the expert point of view eventhough they are not considered as the expert of the topic. Consequently, the requirement of English writing ability would become one of the important criteria for qualified personal in the new century.

Ware (as cited in Lilis and Curry, 2010) has stated that academic writing for research publication takes place around the globe, involving, according to a recent account, 5.5 million scholars, 2,000 publishers and 17,500 research/higher education institutions leading to many scholars whose first language is not English who are now using English for publication purposes. Undeniably, higher students in the non-English country tend to have particular

difficulties in English writing. In higher education research, there are several contexts considering difficult in writing process, which represent literacy perspective, knowledge, technical aspect of writing, characteristics of language and the difference of linguistic and cultural background (Lea and Street as cited in Murshidi, 2014). Moreover, Phothongsunan (2016) claimed that difficulties faced by Thai University Academics' are classified into three types: (1) discursive challenges, non-discursive challenges, and (3) other challenges. Discursive challenges refer to language and context including well-structured paragraph, vocabulary, citation, making reference and so on. While non-discursive challenges relate to elusive factors like plagiarism, motivation, emotional and psychological factors, and others. And the last, other challenges mean lack of support in conducting research from college.

According to this phenomena, the researchers conduct the study in a university in Indonesia because the students have similar requirements to other countries to write specific genre of writing in which the most commonly written paper is academic paper in English. The aim is to investigate the problems of university students in writing English scholarly article for an international journal. Furthermore, it elaborates their perceptions toward the importance of writing for publication and also explores the certain needs to support their skills in the process of writing article.

LITERATURE REVIEW

English as the International Language of Scholarly Publication

Chang (2014) stated that as the world's lingua franca, English is frequently used by non-native speakers (NNS) and native speakers (NS) in particular circumstance that involve both of them (summarized from Crystal, 2003 & Graddol, 2006). Automatically, English achieves a genuinely global status because it has been developed and recognized in every country (Crystal, 2003). In addition, it will be the most evidence in countries where large numbers of people use English in which it is officially used as a

medium of communication in particular field, such as education. Graddol (2006) claimed that English is used increasingly as the medium of education in universities across the world. In fact, international English develops and often centers on academic and scientific communities. As a result, this leads to a circumstance that English is the main language of publication for journals (Bada and Genc, 2010).

Writing for Scholarly Publication

Academic writing is the main role of the scholarship of teaching and learning in university (Lillis & Scott, 2007). Lecturers have to provide students a kind of writing skill subject which is emphasized in the current issue of publication. Accordingly, it could motivate students to promote their ability to write for the international journal by exploring their research interests (Tuck, 2012). In relation to that, it is found that writing for publication is now exciting (Buttery, 2010). You will be forced to think more seriously of the process, components, and new entities when you write more frequently. Klein (2008) argued that writing for publication is an outstanding privilege that should be approached in innovative ways of thinking. He added that writing for publication leads to an opportunity to share original ideas and thoughts, take a role, and report the findings properly based on foundational knowledge in particular area.

Areas of Difficulty for Students in Writing Scholarly Articles

According to Meyer (2014), non-native English researchers experience the manifold problems when writing their academic articles in English as the core requirement for their possible publication in mainstream journals. He added that these difficulties have been extensively documented in the literature and are mainly language/discourse-related, such as low level of basic academic writing skills, including rhetorical and argumentative skills.

Flowerdew (1999) has classified a number of key areas where non-native speakers experience difficulty in writing for publication, as follows (summarized from Adams-Smith, 1984; Bazerman, 1988; Dudley-Evans, 1994; Johns, 1993; Mauranen, 1993; St. John, 1987; Swalles, 1990):

Grammar

The role of grammar instruction in an ESL/EFL context has been a major issue in writing activity for students and teachers alike. Relating to writing for international publication, grammar has its important role to make writing successful. In fact, Surina Nayan, 2002 & Leele Susana Jamian et al., 2006 (as cited in Boon Yih Mah, Irfan Naufal Umar & Voon Foo Thomas Chow, 2013) found that many students still commit the grammatical errors that consume a great deal of the lecturers' time and effort to correct their written tasks. After analyzing the students' mistakes in writing, their grammatical errors seem to vary from local, global and spelling errors in which their numerous grammatical errors in L2 writing reflect their insufficient knowledge.

Use of Citations

According to Atta-Obeng and Lamptey (2012), " Citations make one's writing more persuasive, they are not used simply to avoid plagiarism; they have other important roles as well". They also added that citing the work of particular writer means you acknowledge, understand and respect to his intellectual property rights. To emphasize, citing sources is a skill in writing which requires acknowledgement (Bowden & Di Benedetto, 2001). However, Kendall (2005) and Newton (1995) argued that many students find difficulties of citing and referencing bibliographic sources in their academic writing in which the common difficulty faced by the student in citing reference is reliance on an inappropriate source for instruction on how to reference. Additionally, almost half of students in an interview claimed that they relised making mistakes in citing the

reference but they tend to look for help from friends or old handbook rather than consult to their tutor.

Making Reference to the Published Literature

Neville (as cited in Atta-Obeng, and Lamptey, 2012) defined referencing as the process of acknowledging particular sources of information containing in books, journals, magazines, newspapers, websites, and any others. Failure in making reference properly suitable with its role may lead to accusations of plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious offence in the academic community and may lead to disciplinary action. Furthermore, there is a study which the researchers identified some errors in reference citations in postgraduate students' academic work while working on the KNUST (Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology) space. These included poor citing of reference works, inconsistency in reference citations and use of different citation styles in theses submitted to the same Department. Other errors detected were works cited in a text that was not included in the references at the end of the thesis and works not cited in a text that was included in the references. This is a case study at KNUST and it is focused on the challenges postgraduate students face in reference citation. Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology

Structuring of Argument

Kaplan (as cited in Botley & Hakim, 2014) found that patterns of structuring argument relates to cultures and thought. Studies by Lavelle and Bushrow (2007) defined that academic writing experiences in the context of "integrating disparate ideas, synthesizing perspectives, and extending theory which demands a higher-level construction skill and perspective-taking, as well as greater concern for accuracy, voice, and audience". They argued that people conduct arguments as a necessary aid to decision-making and problem-solving which these can range from highly abstract debates to such practical disputes, most of the arguments arise spontaneously

and are usually worked out only to the degree necessary to win or to resolve the conflict. To simplify, constructing arguments on paper will be well-constructed when the writer express the ideas in line with his background knowledge, in other words, it should not be far away from particular targeted people or culture.

Textual Organization

Crene and Lea (1997) provided several ways to present research article in a well-organized manner. These include writing chronologically, descriptively, analytically (for cause-and-effect and compare/contrast writing), summary writing, and evaluating writing. Various ways of idea development should be made relevant into the moves of the research articles. Kellog (2008) added that the article will be well-organized if the writer considers to taking certain aspect, e.g. knowledge-use principle for being accessible to reach the fluency and quality of writing.

Relating Text to Audience

Miller (as cited in Brown, Vivian, and Hewstone, 1999) and Kress (as cited in Hart, 2007) argued that text should become a negotiation process in particular contexts used, such as social roles, purposes, and cultural preferences. Bazerman (1988) claimed that writing relates to social action, thus, expressing the idea in written text means saying something to the vast number of people, or in another word, writing to sociology. Writing work claims about how people handle words. It is aimed to convey the message to the readers. However, he found that the problem of choosing which words to put on a page seems outward rather than constructing a concept to write. In addition, Bhatia (2002) suggested that a researcher should figure out the goals of the author/audience of the text, their relationship to the text, the special feature/characteristic of the community, the network and linguistic traditions in which the text occur and, the topic that text tries to communicate.

Ways in which to Make Knowledge Claims

There are two types of knowledge claims:

- Claims that are made within particular areas of knowledge or by individual knowers about the world. It is to examine the basis for these first-order claims.
- Claims that are made about knowledge. These are the second-order claims made in that is justified using the tools which usually involve an examination of the nature of knowledge (Cargill & O'Connor, 2009).

Briefly, knowledge claim refers to something that is justified to be true by a particular person on special occasions, such as on debating and expressing the idea either in written text or speech forum.

Ways to Reveal or Conceal the Point of View of the Author

Traxler and Gernsbacher (as cited in Kellog, 2008) argued that the writer should be able to hold in mind the author's idea, the words of the text itself, and the imagination of the reader's interpretation of the text. The representations of the author, the text, and the reader must be held in the storage components of working memory and kept active by allocating attention to them. Thus, for expert writers, they are demanded to contemplate several aspects of executing the views, not only are the basic processes of planning, sentence generation, and reviewing juggled successfully but so are three alternative representations of content.

Hedges to Indicate Caution Expected by the Academic Community

A hedge is a mitigating word, sound or construction used to lessen the impact of an utterance due to constraints on the interaction between the writer and readers, such as politeness, softening the blow, avoiding the appearance of bragging and others (Thomas as cited in Collier, 1995). Typically, they are adjectives or adverbs, but can also consist of clauses. It could be regarded as a form of euphemism. Hedges may intentionally or unintentionally be employed in both spoken and written language since they are

crucially important in communication. Hedges help writers indicate more precisely how the cooperative principle (expectations of quantity, quality, manner, and relevance) is observed in assessments. On the opposite, students are still confused when they are to make hedges in their writing, especially research article. It is because the hedges are to indicate caution expected by the academician.

Interference of Different Cultural Views Regarding the Nature of Academic Processes

There are many investigations on research article writing by Non-Native English (NNE) writers in which the study have shown that NNE research articles writers faced many difficulties due to cultural differences (Ahmad, 1997; Kourilova, 1998; Mirahayuni 2010; Vasconcelos 2007 as cited in Suryani, Kamaruddin, Hashima, Yaacob, Rashid, and Desa, 2014). However, the scholarly article has become a well-codified genre which is apart from language and cultural differences (Gross, Harmon, and Reidy, 2002; Zerbe, and Anderson, 2001). To emphasize, there is no evidence that there are linguistic or cultural differences regarding the purpose of the certain foundational sections within scientific research articles (Swales, 2004). Thus, in spite of the rhetorical differences, the basic structure and social function of the scientific research article is consistent across languages.

METHOD

The main purpose of the research was to identify the difficulties faced by university students in writing paper for international publication. Moreover, it also investigated their perceptions toward the importance of writing paper for international publication and the need of university's support to prepare their writing skill for the academic article.

Participants in this research consisted of 20 university students (14 females; 6 males) from one of universities in Indonesia. All participants are students from master degree and they are chosen by lecturers to write a scholarly article. They are chosen based on some

considerations. Among of them are educational background, achievement, and experience in writing for international publication. The participants were selected using purposive sampling technique. Because of certain characteristics as students of master degree in Indonesia who are to write for international publication, the participants could be representative of the Indonesian university students of master degree.

Closed-questionnaire was designed to find out high level students' difficulties in writing for international publication. It allows respondents to select the answer from a number of options, and therefore, it is easy to use, score, and code to analyze (Fraenkel, 2009). Furthermore, the questionnaire contained 10 types of difficulties separated into two questions of each and 2 types of students' perception toward the importance of international publication and the need of university's support to prepare students' writing in which each of those consisted of 2 questions. Thus, there are 24 items on the questionnaire and they are rated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree (SD)" to "Strongly Agree (SA)". The questionnaires were spread by using google form. Ary (2010) stated that the questionnaire is placed on a website constructed by the researcher, and then, respondents are able to answer the question and submit the questionnaire via online. Eventually, it was considered as an effective and efficient way for both researchers and participants. After the data were collected, these were analyzed by using percentage.

FINDING & DISCUSSION

The questionnaire was used to explore students' difficulties in writing paper for international publication and their perception of the issue. Additionally, all categories were discussed in order.

Students' Difficulties in Writing for International Publication

To investigate the students' difficulties in writing for international publication, the items number 1 - 20 were used. The following were to reveal the distribution of respondents' responses toward each item of the questionnaire.

It is revealed from the table 1 (item number 1 and 2) that 11 respondents (52.5%) agree that they still find difficulty dealing with grammar when they are writing for international publication. In addition, based on item 3 and 4, it is known that among 20 respondents, 14 (70%) respondents disagree that citation is considered as a hindrance for their writing. Furthermore, 18 or 90% of the respondents disagree that making reference to the published literature is difficult (item number 5 and 6).

The table 1 also reveals that 11 or 52.5% of respondents agree that they still find difficulty to structure their arguments when writing (item number 7 and 8). Besides, based on the questionnaire's item number 9 and 10, the result shows that 13 (65%) of respondents agree that they still find difficulty to organize and develop their idea in their writing. In relation to the item number 11 and 12, the data shows that 12 (57.5%) of the respondents agree that relating text to audience is difficult. The next item number 13 and 14 shows that 17 (85%) of the respondents strongly agree that making knowledge claims is very difficult. In item number 15 and 16, it is known that 15 (75%) of the respondents disagree that revealing the point of view of the author is a problem. Furthermore, the result from the item number 17 and 18 above portrays that 14 (70%) of the respondents disagree that using "hedges" to indicate caution expected by the academic community is a challenge. Finally, the data from the item number 19 and 20 depicts that 13 (65%) of respondents agree that they still find difficulty dealing with "interference" of different cultural views regarding the nature of academic processes.

Table 1 Students' difficulties in writing for international publication

Items	Statements	Alternatives (%)			
		SD	D	A	SA
1	I find it difficult to use good English grammar.	10	35	55	-
2	I still make mistakes in using English grammar.	5	45	50	-
3	It is difficult to obtain related articles to make citations.	30	50	25	5
4	I find difficulty in making citations.	15	45	40	-
5	I find it hard to gain guiding books to make references.	20	70	15	-
6	I find difficulty in making references.	15	75	10	-
7	It is hard to organize my idea/opinion in a paragraph.	5	40	50	5
8	I find it difficult to relate the idea from one paragraph to another.	-	50	50	-
9	I find it hard to write clearly and orderly.	-	45	50	5
10	It is hard to write analytically, such as involving cause-effect, comparison, and pro-contra.	-	25	65	10
11	I find difficulty in selecting the words to convey the idea to the readers.	-	35	65	-
12	I find it difficult to convey the idea to particular people related to my research topic.	-	50	50	-
13	It is hard to claim my new research results different from other related research.	-	20	20	60
14	I find it hard to convince readers about my new perspective toward the issue different from other related research.	-	10	20	70
15	I find problem in way to get authors' message in related journals / guiding books.	5	70	25	-
16	It is hard to recognize and reveal the authors' view in the journals/guiding books.	5	70	25	-
17	I find difficulty in framing my research.	-	70	20	10
18	I find it difficult in focusing my research.	10	60	25	5
19	It is hard to involve culture in my research.	10	25	60	5
20	I find difficulty in writing research in order that the message can be accepted by people having different culture.	-	35	60	5

Based on the elaboration of the results, it could be discussed that 85% of students consider "ways to make knowledge claim" as the most difficult aspect they find when they have to write research

article. Most of the respondents find it hard to really make knowledge claim in their research as Karimnia (2013) stated that students had problems in accurately describing their results and effectively supporting a claim. This problem has also been described by non-English-speaking graduate students in the United States (Dong, 1998) and Chinese researchers in Hong Kong (Flowerdew, 1999). It is also in line with the findings of research done by Backlund (2003) in New Zealand where English is the first language who found that students could not generate or produce knowledge. It was stated that the classroom management implemented by lecturers affected students' ability to generate knowledge. The lecturers only did lecturing accompanied by rare discussion among the students.

Furthermore, Backlund (2003) stated that there were numbers of tasks which were missing but actually very important to train students to make the knowledge claim, those missing tasks he mentioned were essays, short papers, reading notes, etc. These tasks can actually prepare the students themselves to defend claims connected with their propositions in discussion and conversation with teachers or fellow students, which is the rule for everyone. Then they also have to claim, in a normative sense, the rightness of their knowledge in various types of examination situations more or less closely related to the content of the same knowledge.

It is revealed that the way to make the knowledge claim is considered as the most difficult aspect compared to other presented difficulties. This is the prove that not only EFL and ESL students who find it hard to deal with knowledge claim but also native-speaker students. The main reason why students indicate only a very few artifacts of their own knowledge creation is the lack of tasks dealing with essays, short papers, reading notes, web pages, group papers, and verbal presentations. This is much dealing with intrinsic problem space in teaching and assessment methods (Marton, 1977).

Furthermore, students (65%) somehow also find problem dealing with organizing and developing their idea in their writing and writing related to accepted culture. The former, however, is not

as big as the way to make knowledge claim because it only deals with textual organization. Sometimes, they get stuck on how their idea is well-organized. It is as O'Connor & Cargill (2009) stated that students find difficulty on how to organize and develop their idea in an ordered way. They believed that the way to overcome this difficulty is by practicing writing more so that students will finally find the pattern when they are writing. In addition, students (65%) also find difficulty dealing with "interference" of different cultural views regarding the nature of academic processes. In the writers' mind, they may think that their writing is culturally accepted, but on the other hand, people having the different culture from the writers may see that their writing is culturally unacceptable to them. Making writing that can be culturally accepted is, of course, difficult. It is in line with Swales' (1990) finding stating that students find it hard to understand the culture from around the world in order that their writing can be culturally received by the readers having a different culture.

Several students (57.5%) consider that relating the text to an audience is difficult. It deals with the choice of words or diction so that the intended audience will fully catch their writing. Students may think that the words they have chosen are very appropriate and easy to understand, but on the other hand, their intended audience may not think so. This case is as Bazerman's (1988) finding stating that the problem of choosing which words to put on a page seems outward rather than constructing a concept to write.

Afterward, students (52,5%) agree that structuring of argument in writing article is seemed to be difficult. This related to how to write the arguments in a well-constructed, once to establish the truth of statement A, B, and C, and so forth, then they can reasonably be expected to assent to the principal claim or assertion. In relation with this, Bailey (2003) stated that structuring argument is considered difficult so that students need to practice more on it, lecturers are also to give them tasks that require them to construct argument then draw a conclusion. Additionally, he also emphasized

on the need of a practical guide for students in order that they can practice and progress.

In addition, grammar is also identified as a problem faced by the students (52,5%) in this research. They may frequently make mistakes in using grammar in their writing. It is in line with some studies that many students in higher education still commit the grammatical mistakes which consequently take the teacher's time and effort to correct their writing (Nayan, 2002 & Jamian, et al., 2006 as cited in Mah, Umar, & Chow, 2013). Furthermore, the grammatical difficulty is considered as a consistent feature of non-native-speaking writers, both second-language writing specialists (Parkhurst, 1990; Fox, 1994) where journal editors and reviewers tend to downplay its seriousness, with the other more abstract features felt to be more problematic.

On the other hand, the other difficulties proposed in this research are rejected by the students in this research. The students find it easy on how they cite and make reference to the published literature. It is because they have read and understood the styles of citation and reference of many different journals. They have also determined which journals they intend to submit so that they can plan and adjust well dealing with them. On the opposite, this research finding is not in line with Peat's (2002) explanation stating that citation and reference in writing research article are a part where students usually make mistakes.

Afterward, they find it easy as well to reveal the point of view of the authors. Eventually, they do not consider an indication of caution expected by the academic community as a difficulty. However, these are not in line with Mauranen's (1993) finding saying that students found it hard to reveal what actually the author's message in the article even if they have read many times.

Students’ Perceptions toward the Importance of International Publication and the Need of University’s Support

To obtain the data on the students’ perceptions toward the importance of international publication and the need of university’s support, four statements are proposed in the questionnaire. The followings are the detailed information and discussion.

Table 2 Students’ Perceptions toward the Importance of International Publication and the Need of University’s Support

Items	Statements	Alternatives (%)			
		SD	D	A	SA
21	I believe that writing and publishing for international journal are highly imperative for my academic.	10	-	25	65
22	I will keep writing article even if it has been rejected by international journals.	10	5	35	50
23	It is necessary that university should provide students with workshops/training of writing for international publication.	5	10	10	75
24	I will join course/training of writing for international publication in order to enrich my knowledge.	5	10	35	50

Table 2 depicts that 18 (87.5%) of the respondents strongly agree that writing and publishing article especially in English is very important (item number 23 and 24). In addition, the above table portrays that 17 (85%) of the respondents strongly agree that university should provide them with workshop and training in order to have better writing and publication.

It could be concluded from the above findings that most participants agree that writing for the international journal is highly crucial to the scholars in the higher education. In another word, English has a function to deliver the idea to global readers. It is in relation to some research stating the academics in a university should recognize the prominence of English. For instance, Duszak and Lewkowicz (2008) has found that English as an international language would certainly help the researchers and the professionals communicate relating to the particular issue through an article. This is

a fact of English as a lingua franca has a prominence role for research and academic writing in the university (Kachru and Nelson, 2006).

More than half of respondents believed that university can provide the support for the scholars in preparing their research writing by conducting a kind of courses or workshop. It is important to obtain appropriate facilities for training such as the writing experts to guide the stages of writing and English language center for language editing. As Photongsunan (2016) said that the support from the university can encourage the academics to be more involved and motivated to write the academic article and also it would be beneficial in their study.

CONCLUSION

The dominance of English in international research has been becoming a current issue in publication. This has made writing scholarly articles in English become increasingly necessary. However, students in master degree tend to have writing problems in several aspects such as knowledge claim, textual organization, interference of different cultural views, relating the text to the audience, structuring of argument, the grammatical rule, and so on. This research found that the most common difficulty faced by students in writing is on how to claim knowledge.

Furthermore, they emphasize on the importance of writing and publishing in the international indexed journal for the sake of the betterment of themselves, university and country. They also argue that university should provide them with a course, training, or workshop to prepare their writing skill for international publication.

This research implies a number of suggestions for EFL lectures, EFL students, EFL curriculum designers in Indonesia. This research suggests that EFL lecturers have to pay special attention to the materials and the way they assess their students in order to stimulate and maintain learners' motivation to write for international publication. In addition, lectures should support and guide their students rather than be controlling or demanding. This research also

advises that Indonesian EFL students should be aware of the importance of writing for international publication. In this regard, students have to read a lot, find the topic and the issue in order that they can be more sensitive to the surroundings. They can also practice writing regularly like blogging and making a journal log.

This research then proposes the suggestion for further research. In this research, it reveals that the most difficult aspect the students face when they are writing for international publication is dealing with the way to make knowledge claims. The next research is to focus on the deeper investigation on ways in which to make knowledge claims and how students overcome that aspect so that the international publication is successfully achieved.

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