



Common Challenges in Academic Writing of English-Majored Seniors at Tay Do University

Phan Thị Minh Uyên¹, Nguyễn Trần Nhã Khanh², Phạm Thị Huỳnh Như³

^{1,2,3} Tay Do University, Vietnam

ABSTRACT

Published Online: July 27, 2023

The thesis "*Common challenges in academic writing of English-majored seniors at Tay Do University*" was conducted to examine the difficulties that seniors majoring in English often meet in academic writing. As a part of the study, 78 English majored seniors in the 3 classes of English 14A, 14B, 14C and 7 English teachers at Tay Do University have been selected as the participants. In this study, an interview with three extended statements for teachers, three extended statements for students, and a questionnaire with 25 closed statements for students are used as instruments to collect the data. The results of the study pointed out some common errors about grammar, vocabulary, organization, punctuation, and background knowledge in academic writing faced by English majored seniors at Tay Do University. It is hoped that this research can be helpful for both the English-majored seniors at Tay Do University to realize their common errors in the process of improving and developing their writing skills.

KEYWORDS:

Challenges, academic writing, English majored seniors

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter is an introduction to the current research. It presents in detail: (1) rationale of the research, (2) aims of the study, (3) research questions, (4) research significance, and (5) the organization of the study.

1.1 Rationale

In the ancient time, writing began with pictographs, and then it was described into more abstract signs and then became the sophisticated script people call cuneiform ("wedge-shaped" in Latin). About one thousand signs represented the names of objects and also stood for words, syllables, and sounds (or parts of them). Therefore, writing became much more developing, and users cannot deny its importance of writing, especially academic writing because it is a type of written communication, which is considered as an exceptional characteristic of the human species.

Over hundreds of years of establishment, writing has helped individuals to inform, collaborate and alert other, while societies benefitted from written history, culture and

knowledge. More importantly, writing is a life skill, not only an essential job-related skill, because it is often the basis upon which others judge the learning, the values, the ideas and the contribution of one to society. In the blog - The Importance of Writing Skills, Satya Brink (2021) believes that "writing is not fleeting; it is permanent. It is a record of what you wished to communicate at a point in time." The writers' writing skills determine if they receive the desired reaction from their reader. Did the writer inform, persuade, calm or entertain as they hoped? The effectiveness of their communication can affect their daily life and their life course outcomes. So, miscommunication can have serious consequences and unintended effects.

Most students encounter challenges in academic writing such as spelling, grammar, vocabulary, task response and coherence errors. When students pronounce English words incorrectly, the listeners can still understand, but not very well. However, the wrong writing that leads to the transmission of the message, it is hard to accept for English-majored senior students when they are not good at writing English. When studying at University, students may not realize the importance of writing academically, until they will graduate from University and start looking for a job; then they realize that most of the companies nowadays require basic or fluent English-speaking skills.

In the above-mentioned problems, this research is conducted with the purpose of finding "Common challenges

Corresponding Author: Phan Thị Minh Uyên

**Cite this Article: Phan Thị Minh Uyên, Nguyễn Trần Nhã Khanh, Phạm Thị Huỳnh Như (2023). Common Challenges in Academic Writing of English-Majored Seniors at Tay Do University. International Journal of Social Science and Education Research Studies, 3(7), 1462-1479*

in academic writing of English-majored seniors at Tay Do University.” It is expected that this research will provide an overview of challenges in writing, which helps both teachers and students can find out suitable and effective solutions to improve students’ academic writing skills.

1.2 Research aims

This research aims to survey some common challenges in academic writing English of English-majored seniors at Tay do University. The findings from this study will furnish the significance of knowledge that each student necessary to have in the academic writing English process to help students improve their academic skills effectively. At the same time, teachers can base on this study to find out good solutions which help much in their teaching methods as well.

1.3 Research question

This research was conducted in order to answer the following question:

- a) What are some challenges that English-majored seniors at Tay Do University often encounter in academic writing?
- b) How can they overcome those challenges to be competent in academic writing?

1.4 Significance of the research

This study mainly focuses on finding out some errors in writing academically of English-majored seniors at Tay Do University. Through the survey about the difficulties are faced by students frequently, this research would be a useful resource to help the English-majored students refer and minimize their errors. Thanks to that, they can find helpful solutions to improve their academic writing skills as well as they never meet those troubles again.

1.5 The organization of the research

The study constants five chapters:

Chapter one, Introduction provides the rationale, the aims, the research question and significance, and the organization of this research.

Chapter two, Literature review consists of the definitions of academic writing, the classifications of academic writing, the importance of academic writing, students’ challenges of academic writing, and the related research papers.

Chapter three, Research methodology presents the research hypotheses, data analysis, research design, research participants, instrument, and research produces.

Chapter four, Result and discussion shows the results from questionnaires for students, the interview for students and the interview with teachers.

Chapter five, Conclusion gives the conclusion, the implications, the limitations, and recommendations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter two attempts to produce the definitions of academic writing, the classifications of academic writing, the importance of academic writing and students’ perceptions of

academic writing. Besides, the related previous studies are also stated in this chapter.

2.1 Terms of definitions

This section illustrated relevant academic vocabulary, namely the definition of academic writing, classifications of academic writing and the importance of academic writing.

2.1.1 Definitions of academic writing

Stephen Bailey (2003) stated that “academic writing is designed for anybody who is studying or planning to study at English-medium colleges and universities and has to write essays and other assignments for exams or coursework.” Also, academic writing is considered “the kind of writing used in high school and college classes. Academic writing is different from creative writing, which is the kind of writing you do when the writers write stories” (Introduction to Academic Writing, Third Edition, 2007). As a matter of fact, academic writing in English is probably different from academic writing in native language. On top of the complexity of the vocabulary of academic English, the users have to learn a series of conventions in style, referencing, and organization, take care to write complete sentences and to organize them in a certain way, and not use slang or contractions.

The objective of academic writing is to present information objectively. Arguments should be based on the evidence being considered, not the author’s biases. All assertions should be backed up with pertinent evidence rather than just being made avoiding casual vocabulary, such as slang, contractions, clichés, and conversational phrases, and choosing words that convey the correct tone.

For examples:

(✖) **Also, a lot** of the findings are **a little** unreliable.

(✓) **Moreover, many** of the findings are **somewhat** unreliable.

Using clear and precise language to ensure that the reader knows exactly what the content mean. This means being as specific as possible and avoiding vague language. For examples:

(✖) **Mary** has been good at this **thing** for **a long time**.

(✓) **Mary** have been experienced in this **field** for **at least 20 years**.

Avoid hedging the claims with words like “perhaps,” as this can give the impression that the learners lack confidence in their arguments. Reflect on their word choice to ensure it accurately and directly conveys the meaning:

(✖) This **could perhaps suggest** that...

(✓) This **suggests** that...

Academic writing generally tries to avoid being too personal. Information about the author may come in at some points-for example in the acknowledgements or in a personal reflection-but for the most part the text should focus on the research itself.

Always avoid addressing the reader directly with the second-person pronoun “you.” Use the impersonal pronoun “one” or an alternate phrasing instead for generalizations. For examples:

- (✖) As a doctor, **you** must treat **your** patients like family.
- (✓) As a doctor, **one** must treat **one's** patients like family.
- (✓) Doctors must treat their patients like family.

The use of the first-person pronoun “I” used to be similarly discouraged in academic writing, but it is increasingly accepted in many fields. If the users are unsure whether to use the first person, pay attention to conventions in their field or ask the instructor.

When the users refer to themselves, it should be for good reason. The users can position themselves and describe what they did during the research, but avoid arbitrarily inserting their personal thoughts and feelings:

- (✖) In my opinion...
- (✖) I think that...
- (✖) I like/dislike...
- (✓) I conducted interviews with...
- (✓) I argue that...
- (✓) I hope to achieve...

2.1.2 Classifications of academic writing

The four main types of academic writing are descriptive, analytical, persuasive, and critical. Each of these types of writing has specific language features and purposes.

a. Descriptive writing is the simplest form of academic writing. Its goal is to present information or facts. A report of the findings from an experiment or a summary of an article are two examples. For a purely descriptive assignment, the following types of directions are acceptable: identify, report, record, summarize and define.

b. Analytical writing entails both descriptive writing and rearranging the facts and information you describe into groups, categories, sections, or relationships. The majority of academic writing is analytical. Depending on the discipline, these groups or connections may already exist, or you may develop them especially for your content. If you're contrasting two theories, you might divide your analysis into different categories, such as how each theory approaches social context, how each theory approaches language acquisition, and how each theory might be used in real-world situations. An analytical assignment may include the following types of instructions: analyze, compare, contrast, relate, and examine.

c. Persuasive writing combines all the characteristics of analytical writing (information + reorganization of the material). The majority of essays are argumentative, and research articles typically have a persuasive aspect in at least the discussion and conclusion. Each assertion made in persuasive writing must be backed up with proof, such as citations to studies or other published sources. A persuasive assignment may include the following types argue, evaluate, discuss, and take a position.

d. Critical writing Research, graduate, and advanced undergraduate writing frequently include critical writing. It has all the characteristics of persuasive writing plus at least one more point of view. In contrast to critical writing, which calls for considering at least two points of view, including your

own, persuasive writing requires you to have your own point of view on a subject or issue.

A critique of a journal article or a literature review that points out the advantages and disadvantages of the available research are examples of critical writing assignments. The kinds of instructions for critical writing include: critique, debate, disagree and evaluate.

2.1.3 The importance of academic writing

A key component of language development and academic success for children at all levels of education is the ability to build communicative competence in writing. Writing is considered “the most principal skill that students require in order to enhance their personal development and academic success.” (Mukulu, 2006).

Academic writing is very formal, objective and concise in comparison to other styles of writing. It is the style of writing that used in the field of academics. From a different angle, academic writing is crucial for people entire working and professional life. Due to the numerous tight standards that make it formal, it promotes professionalism and gives the impression that the academic users are a professional. Additionally, it aids in the development of the written communication skills, which are crucial for each career advancement. Today, the majority of jobs require proficient writing abilities, thus these abilities are highly desired by most employers.

During a Harvard Business Review, Kyle Wiens (2012) CEO of Ifixit stated that “he will not employ any person who have bad grammar skills.” A grammar test is required of all applicants when they submit an application for an employment with Ifixit. Kyle said that he discovered that individuals who perform better on grammar tests also perform better on tasks that are absolutely unrelated to writing. In actuality, 73% of firms want applicants with great written communication abilities. Employers value written communication more than any other skill, surpassing leadership and group-working aptitude.

There has been widespread awareness of the critical role of academic writing. The book *Demystifying Academic Writing* by Zhihui Fang discussed and shared his idea that “academic writing is a means of producing, codifying, transmitting, evaluating, renovating, teaching, and learning knowledge and ideology in academic disciplines.” Besides, Azizi Ahmad from Kuala Lumpur said in 24 Views of The Star newspaper (17 September 2018) that “academic writing has always had a central role in the academics' arena globally.” As, it serves as a tool of communication that conveys acquired knowledge in a specific field of study. Writing academically will help student analyze, convey understanding, think critically and focus on technique and style.

In-depth research is a hallmark of academic writing, which results in good scholarly works. Students are expected to investigate the many viewpoints on the subject they are studying and to assess theories and concepts from several perspectives. They also conduct thorough study to make sure

their essays and research papers are reputable and that the arguments are adequately backed by the literature. In addition to developing unparalleled abilities in data collection, analysis, and presentation, English learners also become adept at identifying the gaps in existing research, making them great researchers. Writing in an academic style is crucial for academic performance and is required for discipline learning. When people write anything, they have resources, authority, and agency in knowledge generation, identity building, disciplinary procedures, social standing, and professional promotion. This is so they can control how academic writing they did in English.

In conclusion, academic writing places a lot of emphasis on method and how to use it to effectively communicate ideas. Students will find it much simpler to produce papers throughout university if they learn about style and how to compose essays early in their academic careers.

2.2 Students' challenges of academic writing

Due to the difficulty of mastering academic writing, many students face a great challenge in acquiring this skill and consequently failed to obtain a passing grade (Al Mubarak, 2017; Fadhel, 2019). These difficulties may occur because of different factors such as grammar, vocabulary, organization, punctuation and lack of background knowledge.

2.2.1 Some common errors in grammar

“Grammar is the structural foundation of our ability to express ourselves. The more we are aware of how it works, the more we can monitor the meaning and effectiveness of the way we and others use language. It can help foster precision, detect ambiguity, and exploit the richness of expression available in English” (David Crystal, “In Word and Deed”, TES Teacher, April 30, 2004). So, if a student wants to write an essay well, he or she must be competent and fluent in grammar because grammar is the skeleton of the language. However, students often make grammatical errors in their writing such as sentence structure, tenses, relative clause, subject - verb agreement, prepositions and the articles.

James (2005) pointed that “Grammar is a study of language and describes the way of putting words together to make a meaningful stance.” It is very significant in academic writing essays because it offers knowledge that aids the reader's comprehension. It is the framework that allows the learners to express specific meaning to the audience. However, students often make grammatical errors in their writing such as tenses, part of speech, word order and prepositions. They need to make their writing clearly and coherently. When English learners use the wrong tense, the meaning of the sentence may be wrong, too.

For examples of grammatical mistakes about tense and superlative adjectives:

- (✖) He likes Vietnamese food.
- (✓) He likes Vietnamese food **the most**.
- (✖) She is **the beautifullest girl** in the class.
- (✓) She is **the most beautiful girl** in the class.

a. Sentence structure

Sentence structure is how a sentence's essential grammatical elements (a subject, predicate, and sometimes direct or indirect objects) are combined. According to the sentence structure, English sentences can be divided into three types: simple sentences, compound sentences, and complex sentences. Compound sentences and complex sentences are just obtained by connecting simple sentences with some connecting means, such as parallel conjunctions or subordinate conjunctions. Therefore, after mastering the basic sentence patterns of simple sentences, complex sentences can be analyzed by handling the connecting parts and simple sentences are made up of five basic sentence patterns, which are as follows:

1. Subject + linking verb + predicate. For example: Alana is a nurse.

2. Subject + intransitive verb (phrase) (adverbial). For example: It rises very quickly.

3. Subject + transitive verb (phrase) + object. For example: The widespread use of the smartphone changed our society and culture.

→ Here, it should pay attention to the use of an infinitive or gerund phrase as an object in this sentence pattern.

4. Subject + transitive verb + indirect object + direct object. For example: Jame brings me his favorite book.

There are other verbs for this type: give, pass, tell, show, leave, offer, promise, teach, pass, etc.

5. Subject + object + object complement. For example: My mother encouraged me to keep on competing.

b. Tense

“Tenses are tools to express time in language, that are the important part in grammar. According to corpus research, in academic writing, the three tenses used the most often are the simple present, the simple past, and the present perfect” (Biber et al., 1999; Caplan, 2012). The next most common tense for capstone writers is the future; the doctoral study/dissertation proposal at Walden is written in this tense for a study that will be conducted in the future.

For examples of grammatical mistakes about tense:

1. Use “the present simple” instead of “the past simple”

Example (1):

(✖) I had an amazing birthday party at Phu Quoc island. And my best friend - Alice, also **go** there and **bring** me a giant surprise gift.

(✓) I had an amazing birthday party at Phu Quoc island. And my best friend - Alice, also **went** there and **brought** me a giant surprise gift.

→ Example (1) recounts a birthday party that took place in the past. However, while correctly using the past simple, in the first sentence, the writer unconsciously used the present simple “go” and “bring” in the following sentence.

2. Use “the past simple” instead of “the present perfect”

Example (2):

(✖) Traveling is my hobby. I **traveled** to many places, from European countries to Asian countries.

(✓) Traveling is my hobby. I **have traveled** to many places, from European countries to Asian countries.

→ In the example (2), although the action of traveling has been repeated and is still being performed, instead of using the present perfect, the writer has used the past simple to describe the action of me. Therefore, this grammatical point in the above sentence is incorrect, it should be replaced with the present perfect tense (**traveled** → **have traveled**). It should be remembered that for cases where an action was performed in the past and is still continuing in the present, or its result affects the present, the present perfect should be used.

3. Confusion of “present perfect” and “past perfect”

Example (3):

(✗) I am currently a student at Tay Do University. I **had studied** here for 4 years.

(✓) I am currently a student at Tay Do University. I **have studied** here for 4 years.

→ In example (3), since the action of “I” is not finished yet and no action will be taken after that, it is not reasonable to use the past perfect here. Instead using the present perfect is most correct.

Example (4):

(✗) After I **have visited** Hoi An, I took my family to Son Tra peninsula.

(✓) After I **had visited** Hoi An, I took my family to Son Tra peninsula.

→ In example (4), the act of visiting Hoi An was started and ended. Immediately after that “I” made the move to another location. So it is more correct to use the past perfect tense.

4. Misuse of irregular verbs

Example (5):

(✗) I **have fell** in love with Vietnamese cuisine.

(✓) I **have fallen** in love with Vietnamese cuisine.

→ In example (5), when using the present perfect, the writer needs to use the correct past participle “fallen” instead of “fell”.

In formal writing, it is important to keep verb tenses consistent so that readers can follow the progress of ideas and arguments easily. In creative writing, verb tenses may be used inconsistently for effect, but in academic writing, it is important to use verb tenses consistently throughout a paper, carefully signaling any necessary shifts in tense.

c. Relative clauses

One of the features of written academic English that gives it its greater complexity is longer sentences, with more frequent use of subordinate clauses. According to Miraftabi, McAnsh & Pennington (2006), “a relative clause” is “a relative clause is a group of words that is attached to a noun and serves to narrow the meaning of that noun. Relative clauses typically begin with a relative pronoun which, that, or who.”

Although relative clauses are widely used, when using relative clauses, academic writers can make a lot of mistakes. Some typical errors can be mentioned as follows:

1. Misuse of relational pronouns between people and things

Example (1):

(✗) I like the book **who** you gave me last time.

(✓) I like the book **which/ that** you gave me last time.

→ Because “who” refers to “a person”, the word “who” cannot be used in this sentence, so change “who” to “which” or “that”.

2. Confusion between WHO and WHOM

Both “who” and “whom” are used to replace nouns of people. However, the relative pronoun “who” can be both the subject and the object; and “whom” can only be an object.

Example (2):

I like the boy **whom/ who** I just met this morning.

→ In example (2), “I” is the subject of the action “met” and “the boy” acts as the object in the sentence. Therefore both “whom” and “who” can be used.

Example (3):

I like that boy **who** is the author of this book.

→ The relative pronoun “who” replaces the phrase “that boy”, which acts as the subject in the sentence “that boy is the author of this book”. Therefore, example (2) must use “who” instead of “whom” as the subject of the relative clause.

3. Use appropriate relative pronouns in definite and indefinite clauses

The relative pronoun “that” is quite easy to use because it can substitute for both person and thing nouns, as both the subject and the object. However, while other pronouns like who, which, etc. can be used in both definite and indefinite relative clauses, the relative pronoun “that” can only be used in clauses defined relationship.

Example (4):

(✗) The doctor, **that** my brother knew in high school, just visited my house

(✓) The doctor, **who** my brother knew in high school, just visited my house

→ In example (4), the relative clause “that my brother knew in high school” is an indefinite relative clause, which means that when this clause is removed from the sentence, the reader still understands the meaning of the sentence. Therefore, it cannot use “that” here but must use “who” or “whom”.

4. Some relative pronouns cannot be replaced

There are some cases where it is impossible to replace one relative pronoun with another, specifically:

If “which” replaces the main clause and is the subject of an indefinite (optional) relative clause behind, it cannot replace the word “which” with other relative pronouns.

Example (5):

The male birds sang, **which** attracted nearly females.

Only the word “whose” is used as a possessive pronoun, so “whose” cannot be replaced by other relative pronouns.

Example (6) :

I tried to help people **whose** money had been stolen.

If the main noun consists of two or more nouns, including both people and things, you must use the relative pronoun “that”.

Example (7):

The man and his dog **that** I met this morning are missing.

5. Some relative pronouns cannot be omitted in sentences

In some cases, the relative pronoun can be omitted. However, there are cases where the relative pronoun must be kept in the sentence, namely the pronoun “whose” cannot be omitted.

In an informal style, the relative pronoun can be omitted in the defining relative clause and when not acting as the subject of the relative clause. In other words, it can omit “who,” “whom,” “which,” “that” when these relative pronouns act as objects and there is no comma before them.

Example (8):

This is the movie ~~which~~ I like

→ “Which” is the object, there is no comma in front, so the above sentence can be omitted to “This is the movie I like”.

Example (9):

This is the movie, **which** I watched many times.

→ In example (9), the relative pronoun which replaces the word “the movie”, this word acts as the object in the sentence “I watch the movie many times”, but is preceded by a comma “which,” so the pronoun “which” cannot be omitted.

d. Subject-verb agreement

The Albert Team (2023) stated that “subject-verb agreement refers to the relationship between the subject and predicate of the sentence. Subjects and verbs must always agree in two ways: tense and number.” This is another one of the common grammatical mistakes that many academic writers get confused over. This mistake is usually because of confusion over the number of subjects and verbs used in a sentence. If the subject is plural, the verb should be in plural form too, and if the subject is singular, the same applies to the verb.

Example (1): The **dog chases** the cat.

→ In example (1), the subject “dog” is singular; therefore, the verb that describes the action of the subject must also be singular: “chases.” If the subject was plural, the verbs would have to change form to agree with the subject.

Example (2): The **dogs chase** the cat.

→ In example (2), since the subject is now plural, the ‘-s’ has to be removed from the verb in order to have subject-verb agreement.

In academic writing, neglecting subject-verb agreements has serious consequences. These include not getting the writer’s message across, confusing the readers, and reducing the writer credibility. Academic writing is characterized by perfect syntax, sentence structure, and grammar. These things cannot be ignored, and that need to pay attention to subject-verb agreements when writing a manuscript.

e. Preposition

Wikipedia defines “English prepositions” as “words – such as of, in, on, at, from, etc. – that function as the head of a prepositional phrase, and most characteristically license a noun phrase object (e.g., in the water).” Semantically, they most typically denote relations in space and time. Morphologically, they are usually simple and do not inflect. They form a closed lexical category.

According to GrammarBook, “a preposition is a word or set of words that indicates location (in, near, beside, on top of) or some other relationship between a noun or pronoun and other parts of the sentence (about, after, besides, instead of, in accordance with).” A preposition is not a preposition unless it goes with a related noun or pronoun, called the object of the preposition. For examples:

(1) “Let’s start before noon.”

(2) “We’ve never meet before.”

→ In the example (1), “before” is a preposition, and “noon” is its object. But in the example (2), there is no object; “before” is an adverb modifying “met”.

Here are the prepositions most commonly used in academic writing, with some explanations for their use:

about – around something or enclosing something

at – connected to a location

for – with a purpose or giving a reason

from – the origin of something

in – completely or partly enclosed by something

of – belonging to something or someone; contained in something

on – the basis for something

to – in a direction

with – connected to something and near something; using something

f. The article “a, an, the”

Wikipedia defines “the articles in English” as “the definite article (the) and the indefinite articles (a, an).” They are the two most common determiners and used before nouns or noun equivalents, and are a type of adjective.

For examples:

(1) **The** Nile is the longest river in the world.

(2) **An** owl was flying in the sky”.

(3) **A** duck was swimming in the lake”.

There are 4 common mistakes made by academic writing users when using the article:

1. Mistaken times between “a” and “an”

The article “a” goes with singular count nouns that start with a consonant when pronounced, and the article “an” goes with singular count nouns that start with a vowel when pronounced.

Example (1):They need **an**umbrella

→ The word “umbrella” is pronounced /ʌm'brɛl.ə/. Because it starts with the /ʌ/ sound, users will have to use the article “an” instead of “a”.

Example (2):I am a student at **a**university in the Mekong Delta

→ The word “university” is pronounced /ˌjuː.nɪ'vɜː.sə.ti/. Because it starts with the /j/ sound, even though it also starts with the letter “u” - a vowel, the user still has to use the article “a” instead of “an”.

2. Forgetting to add articles with nouns with previous adjectives

In case the noun phrase is too long, the academic writers will be able to forget that in essence, the noun phrase is still the main noun and auxiliary component and still needs to add an

article if necessary. This is especially likely to happen with complex noun phrases.

For examples:

(3) She is **a beautiful woman**

(4) My father puts **a traditional large old round wooden** table in our kitchen.

3. Forgetting to use the article ‘the’ with public places

For public places that are familiar to everyone, learners are required to use the article “the”, even in the case of more than one public place.

For examples:

(5) She’s at **the** library.

(6) He’s at **the** mall

4. Use the article “the” with general comment sentences

Example (7):

(✗) I like **the** apples

(✓) I like apples.

→ In the case of general comment sentences, example (7) indicates all of something (the apples), learners must not use the article “the” (applies to countable and uncountable plural nouns).

This only applies to the article “the.” With the article “a” or “an,” learners can use it to make general comments, but the use of the article “a/an” to make comments is not more common than direct plural nouns.

2.2.2 Some common errors in vocabulary

Richards and Renandya (2002) stated that, “Vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency and provides much of the basis for how well learners listen, speak, read and write. Without an extensive vocabulary ... learners often achieve less than their potential and may be discouraged from making use of language”. Vocabulary is the important aspect of writing because it is a basic component of the successful writing. It is also an essential part of language learning. Students can express their ideas logically and clearly if they have large vocabulary, know the meaning and understand how to use it. Also “Vocabulary is regarded as free standing item of language that has meaning”, McCathy (1990).

a. Word form

“A word-form is a syntagmatic unit between the morpheme and the phrase that is generally taken by linguists to correspond to the element written between two spaces in many orthographies”, according to Glottopedia (2014). In academic writing in English, this is one aspect that English learners often make mistakes in is in correctly forming words within a sentence, as it shown below:

(1) Word form in Noun form

(✗) “They have many **believes.**”

(✓) “They have many **beliefs.**”

(2) Word form in Verb form

(✗) “Soldiers are trained **obedience** without question.”

(✓) “Soldiers are trained to **obey** without question.”

(3) Word form in Adjective form

(✗) “Lisa has a **charm** smile.”

(✓) “Lisa has a **charming** smile.”

(4) Word form in Adverb form

(✗) “That statement is not **necessary** true.”

(✓) “That statement is not **necessarily** true.”

Being able to write accurately is undoubtedly an important academic skill, and there are many reasons that a student should work to form the words they use correctly every time.

b. Word choice

“Word choice in writing is the usage of effective and precise language that conveys information not just in a practical way but also to enlighten the reader,” Enago Academy (2021). Academic writing is a set of options, just like most other types of writing. When it comes time to write, the writer must first carefully select the words that will best convey the concept before deciding how to rearrange those words into phrases, sentences, and even paragraphs. Considerations that prevent the author from providing the readers with accurate information must be addressed when assessing word choice. Some of the most common problems concerning word choice usage include the following:

1. “Awkward”, “vague”, and “unclear” word choice

For example:

Having finished with studying, the spaghetti was quickly eaten.

→ This sentence is not hard to understand because of the words the writer chose—everybody knows what studying, spaghetti, and eating are. The problem here is that readers will naturally assume that the first bit of the sentence “Having finished with studying” goes with the next noun that follows it—which, in this case, is “the spaghetti”! It does not make a lot of sense to imply that the spaghetti was studying. What the writer was actually trying to express was something more like this: “Having finished with studying, the students quickly ate the spaghetti”.

2. “Unclarity” word choice

Sometimes, problems with clarity are a matter of word choice.

✓ Misused words—the word does not actually mean what the writer thinks it does. For example: “Cree Indians were a monotonous culture until French and British settlers arrived”. Instead, “Cree Indians were a homogenous culture” would be more appropriate.

✓ Words with unwanted connotations or meanings. For example: “I sprayed the ants in their private places”. It should be changed to “I sprayed the ants in their hiding places”.

✓ Using a pronoun when readers can not tell whom/what it refers to. For example: “My cousin Jane hugged my sister Lucy, even though she didn’t like her very much”. If the writer replaces she-her with their name, the sentence will be easier to understand, “My cousin Jane hugged my sister Lucy, even though Jane does not like Lucy very much”.

✓ Use of Clichés

Clichés are catchy little phrases so frequently used that they have become trite, corny, or annoying. They are

problematic because their overuse has diminished their impact, and because they require several words, where just one would do.

For example: I am as loose as a goose today.

→ The cliché “loose as a goose” needs to be replaced in the revised version to give direct information in a simpler manner, “I am very relaxed today”.

c. Lack of vocabulary

According to Thornbury (2002), “Without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed”. In fact, one of the biggest challenges pupils encounter is having a limited vocabulary. They are challenging to see while demonstrating a topic since they lack language. Students struggle to write what they want to write because of this. Before writing, they must research the subject and come up with fresh ways to present their ideas. If the students' vocabulary is insufficient, they will struggle to express themselves in writing. Additionally, individuals encounter difficulties while deciding which words to use in various settings. In conclusion, a word has more than one meaning and might have additional meanings depending on the situation. As a result, students frequently struggle to find the right words to express their ideas while writing essays.

2.2.3 Organization

According to Husna (2013), “Good organization will help the readers better to understand the ideas presented.” In actuality, students struggle with writing because they struggle to articulate their thoughts in a clear and compelling manner. They are unsure of which thought should come first and which should come next when writing. Cohesion and coherence, text macrostructure, logical information organization, and story structure are all essential components of effective writing (Grab & Kaplan, 1996). Academic writing should have consistency and cohesion, among other qualities. Cohesion, which is the process of connecting one phrase to the next, aids in coherence (Bex, 1996). The concept of cohesion is frequently applied when analyzing textual units within a text. It is the method a speaker or writer use to convey a sense of connectedness through the inherent connections between words, phrases, and sentences (Ammar, 2017).

2.2.4 Some common errors in punctuation

a. Punctuation

According to Pakir (1896, p.75), “punctuation is the pragmatics of written language.” Punctuation is one of the most important things in written English. It is used to create sense and clarity in sentences. Students often use punctuation to structure and organize their writing. Using the wrong punctuation or even wrong placement of punctuation can change the meaning of the sentences. Without any punctuation will make the readers unclear.

Students do not likely care much about these problems because they think they are not necessary. Actually, there are 3 common punctuation mistakes in academic writing including incorrect capitalization or failure to capitalize essential words/phrases, failure to use commas in special grammatical

structures, and lack of apostrophes when writing a shortened comparison sentence structure.

Example (1):

(✘) The number of **Teachers** working voluntarily is 40

(✓) The number of **teachers** working voluntarily is 40

→ It can be easily seen in example (1) that the sentence made a mistake when capitalizing the first letter of the word “Teachers”. Capitalizing the first letter of a word depends on certain rules that students need to learn and follow to avoid making mistakes.

There are some cases where it is necessary to capitalize the first letter of a word:

1. Rules for capitalizing the first letter of a sentence:

(My mother is a teacher).

2. Rules for capitalizing the personal pronoun “I” (I am going to go to the cinema).

3. Rules for capitalizing proper nouns (Tom and Jerry are playing chess).

4. Rules for capitalizing proper adjectives (The Vietnamese people are kindful).

5. Rules for capitalizing nouns made up of proper nouns (Filipinos are usually good at English).

6. Rules for capitalizing people's titles (People's titles) (You can meet Dr. John at 2 p.m).

7. Rules for capitalization of titles, books, movies, and TV shows (My favorite movie is “Harry Potter”).

8. Rules for capitalizing days and months (My birthday is May 18).

9. Rules for capitalizing school subjects (My sister loves English).

10. Capitalization rules related to geography (Mary is living in the North).

Example (2):

(✘) Overall, most of the international students in Australia came from **China** whereas Brazil and Malaysia students only made up the minority.

(✓) Overall, most of the international students in Australia came from **China**, whereas Brazil and Malaysia students only made up the minority.

→ In example (2) forgot to use commas when applying the structure “Whereas” - a special structure. This small mistake turned from a scoring structure into an error that caused the contestant to lose points directly. Therefore, when using special structures, it is necessary to pay attention to punctuation marks to get the perfect score and avoid unexpected mistakes.

There are some special grammatical structures that require the use of commas:

1. Indefinite relative clause (Rose, who has a beautiful smile, is my cousin).

2. The sentence has 2 clauses and the clauses are connected by isotopic conjunctions (For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet) - FANBOY (She is hungry, but she doesn't want to eat).

3. While/ While (While my mother was cooking dinner, the phone accidentally rang).

Example (3):

(✖) In 1994, Spain's percentage of exporting hardwares and computers was 37%, approximately five times higher than the USA.

(✓) In 1994, Spain's percentage of exporting hardwares and computers was 37%, approximately five times higher than the USA's.

→ Example (3) has made an error of missing an apostrophe (') because the two sides are not equal in semantics. "Spain's percentage of exporting" does not correspond to "the USA" because one is talking about "percent of exports" and the other is referring to "the United States of America." In order for the sentence to be grammatically correct and complete, it must be changed to "the USA's" so that the two sides are equal.

It is crucial to consider the comparison's goal and symmetry when academic authors are crafting comparative sentences and wish to employ reduction. Additionally, it's crucial to maintain the distinctions between the various elements if the learners wish to condense the comparison of two similar structures into a few shorter, more succinct lines.

b. Other errors

There are a few Latin terms that are still commonly used in English academic writing, including the abbreviations "e.g." and "i.e." Sometimes English learners use these abbreviations interchangeably without really understanding what each abbreviation means and how to use it appropriately, and it is important to use the correct abbreviation to ensure that the meaning of a sentence is retained. Both of these abbreviations are commonly used at the beginning of nonrestrictive elements that are enclosed in either commas or parentheses. Most style guides suggest the use of a comma after both "e.g." and "i.e." Here are some examples of how to use, "e.g." and "i.e." in a sentence:

(1) "You should eat more food that contains a lot of fiber, e.g. fruit, vegetables, and bread."

(2) "The names of political parties are always capitalized, e.g. the Green Party."

→ In examples (1) (2), 'e.g.' implies that other examples are being omitted, do not use "etc." in the same list.

(3) "She's a Geisha, i.e., she's from Japan."

(4) "After work, I'll walk over to that new restaurant, i.e., Gogi."

→ In examples (3) (4), 'i.e.' specify something mentioned previously; it can be used interchangeably with "specifically" or "namely".

2.2.5 Background knowledge

In the academic context, Dudley-Evans & St. John (1998) pointed out that "the students are required to produce specific writing genres such as essay, summary, critical review, and research paper". English learners who want to write a successful essay must have a broad understanding of a variety of subjects. They are unable to comprehend the subject or coordinate their thoughts due to a lack of understanding. Since they lack realistic social experience, they may feel uncomfortable when confronted with new or difficult topics.

Writing that shows an understanding of context is crucial for helping English learners make sense of unfamiliar topics and concepts. They need to focus on more than just grammar and vocabulary if they want to improve the quality of their writing. Knowing the context in which a problem or issue exists is crucial. In other words, it is information that has been learned via some kind of formal or informal education or training. The ability to write well relies heavily on prior knowledge. Students who aspire to compose high-quality essays should familiarise themselves well with their subject areas or have great background knowledge.

In addition, Adams and Keene (2000) noted that "learning to master writing skills can help students to deal successfully with their academic demands and to perform effectively in their disciplines and professional contexts." With poor background knowledge, the writers cannot build good ideas. They feel nervous when they face a new or hard topic, as they do not have any experiences in their lives. For example, the essay requires students to talk about a person's creativity in many fields, such as writing, art, film, and business.

Therefore, students need to have information when faced with a new topic. If not, writers cannot write anything. Background knowledge includes both a writer's real-world experiences and information, which is why English-majored students do not have many experiences in social life and feel difficulty in the writing process.

2.3 The related research papers

There are many researchers carrying out the earlier studies about common errors in English-speaking class. There are several other research related to common errors in writing essay done by major teachers at Tay Do University.

For example, the first one that should be mentioned is the research "Difficulties in writing essays of English-majored sophomores at Tay Do University" conducted by Nguyen Hiep Thanh Nga, Pham Thu Uyen and Phan Thi Minh Uyen. This investigation was conducted to discover some difficulties in learning and writing essays of 53 sophomores from 12A and 12B classes at Tay Do University. The instruments of this research were questionnaires, interview questions, and essay samples. Exploration has found that sophomores had many difficulties in writing essays such as vocabulary, grammar structures, idea arrangement, background knowledge, and others. Based on the research results, students could recognize their difficulties and find ways to overcome them.

Similarly, a persistent theme in writing is "A study on the difficulties in writing argumentative essays of English-majored sophomores at Tay Do University," conducted by Dang Thi Hanh, Chau Thanh Hai, and Tra To Quyen with the aim of carrying out some of the difficulties faced by second-year students in essay writing. The participants of this study were 90 English-majored sophomores in course 13 and two teachers who teach the English language at Tay Do University. During this study, questionnaires and interviews were used as

two tools for data collection. They feel that their study enhances academic understanding of factors including vocabulary, grammar, and coherence, the organization and development of an argumentative essay, and the lack of critical thinking.

Moreover, according to Phan Thi Minh Uyen, Nguyen Thi Thuy Hang, and Le Thanh Trung (2020), the subjects of this study were five majoring English teachers and 100 English majoring sophomores studying in three classes, including English 14A, 14B, and 14C, at Tay Do University. The instruments used in this study were an interview with three questions and a questionnaire with 25 statements on the topic of “A study on the difficulties in writing essays of English-majored sophomores at Tay Do University.” The findings of the study found that there were five main causes, including background knowledge, vocabulary, grammar structures, idea arrangement, and orthography, that cause English major sophomores to write unsuccessful essays.

In conclusion, with the previous studies, it can be concluded that academic writing is a crucial challenge for majoring students. The findings of these studies also showed that students faced a lot of challenges in writing essays, such as vocabulary and grammar. The last one, orthography, including organization, punctuation, and background knowledge, are the difficulties that students often encounter in writing essays.

3. METHODOLOGY

The methodology is presented in this chapter to show how this research was carried out. First of all, this chapter is begun by some hypotheses. Then, it mentions the data analysis, the research design and the participants. This thesis is followed by research instruments with the results of the interview and questionnaire in details.

3.1 Hypotheses

According to the literature review in Chapter 2 and research questions, it was hypothesized that English-majoring students at Tay Do University often encounter errors in academic writing, such as mistakes in grammar, vocabulary, organization, punctuation, and background knowledge in academic writing.

3.2 Research design

This survey research was conducted at Tay Do University to address the study’s questions. Seniors at Tay Do University with an English major made up the participants. The instrument served as the foundation for the validity and dependability of the study findings. Both a quantitative and a qualitative analysis were used to examine it. Participants would offer accurate information by answering the questionnaires and participating in interviews. The information from the interview form and the questionnaire will then be examined to get the final result for discussion.

3.3 Participants

The study was conducted on 78 seniors majoring in English course 14 (14A, 14B, and 14C) at Tay Do University.

They were 22 males and 56 females selected randomly, and they came from different areas, both cities and countrysides. Most of them were under the age of 22. The younger was 21 years old, and the older was 23 years old. They all speak Vietnamese as their mother tongue, and English is considered their foreign language. The majority of them have been learning for between 5 and 7 years. These participants have studied five modules of the English writing subject, from writing 1 to writing 5. In addition, they have studied scientific research methods as well as written research papers and reports, especially perfecting their academic writing skills. The main reason for choosing seniors as the prime participant population is based on their frequency of exposure to English writing throughout their learning. In other words, seniors possess a higher amount of experience in writing compared to freshmen, sophomores, and juniors.

3.4 Data analysis

Following data collection, the survey and interview data will be analyzed (description and reliability test) using Google Forms software. Most often, data from interviews, observational studies, and other sources is understood using the qualitative analysis method. It will be estimated and aggregated how much information was collected together.

3.5 Instruments

The instruments of this research were an interview for students with three questions, an interview with students with three questions, and a questionnaire for students with 21 statements. All the statements used in the questionnaire were originally written in English. By using two research instruments, students’ problems in understanding and employing academic style in writing might be feasibly revealed.

3.5.1 Interview

There are seven English-majored teachers and fifteen English-majored seniors being invited to conduct interviews. The interview questions are used to get a better understanding of students’ attitudes toward academic writing from their teachers. The paper interview was a very valuable method for gathering input from teachers because, when answering questions, they specifically articulated their students’ challenges and feelings toward those difficulties, as well as suggesting any solutions for the researcher. Also, doing interviews with helping the senior majors comprehend their difficulties in English academics.

3.5.2 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was very important in this study because it clearly showed the difficulties of students. This questionnaire contained four questions and 21 statements. It includes two main parts. The first part was about students’ personal information, such as gender, age, class, hometown, years of learning English, and some general questions about their English proficiency. The second part was 21 statements (numbered from 5 to 25) illustrated in a table designed on the basis of the five-degree scales, including Strongly agree (SA)-(1), Agree (A)-(2), Neutral (N)-(3), Disagree (DA)-(4), and

Strongly disagree (SD)-(5). Students could check the relevant column next to each statement. In general, the questionnaire was classified into the following sections:

Statement's content
a. Question 1 to 4: Student's background of academic writing
b. Question 5 to 7 The importance of academic writing
c. Question 8 to 13 Some common errors in grammar
d. Question 14 to 16 Some common errors in vocabulary
e. Question 17 to 19 - Some common errors in organization
f. Question 20 to 22 Some common errors in punctuation
g. Question 23 to 25 Lack of background knowledge

3.6 Produres

In this part, the process of doing this study was presented. It took about 16 weeks, and it was divided into 4 steps. All the activities of conducting the study were listed in the following:

Step 1: The first three weeks

- Meeting the supervisor and choosing a suitable topic.
- Making the outline of the study.
- Designing the questionnaire and interview.
- Finding materials.
- Writing chapter 1.

Step 2: From the 4th to 8th week

- Writing chapter 2.
- Contacting and asking the teacher for the permission to deliver the interview.
- Delivering the questionnaire to students to collect the data.

Step 3: From the 9th to 13th week

- Writing chapter 3 and chapter 4.
- Analyzing the data collected from questionnaire.
- Making the outline of chapter 4.

Step 4: The last three weeks

- Completing the research by writing chapter 4.
- Writing chapter 5.
- Editing and completing the research.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the questionnaire are shown in this chapter. The final results are drawn from analyzing the data collected from 78 English-majored seniors students and 15 students for interview and 7 teachers in chapter 3.

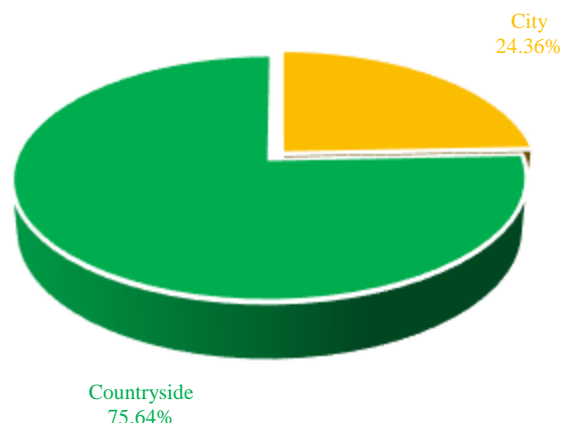
4.1 Results of the questionnaire

After collecting all the relevant details and ideas from 78 English-majored seniors and 7 English majoring teachers via the questionnaire and interviews, the data were analyzed. The findings offered statistical proof of several typical

mistakes in grammar, vocabulary, organization, punctuation, and background knowledge.

4.1.1 Students' background and their attitude toward academic writing in English

Figure 1. Students' living environment



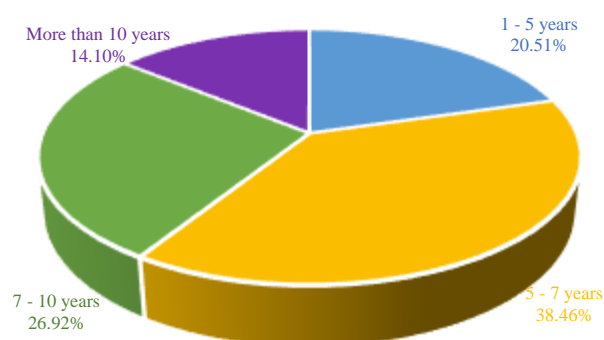
According to random statistics, 24.36% (19/78) of the participants who were English major course 14 seniors at Tay Do University said they had come from the city. In addition, 75.64% (59/78) of the remaining students had come from the countryside. They came from different areas, both the city and the countryside; moreover, each area has its own teaching method, manual, and style.

That was the explanation for why they have not found effective academic writing skills in English. Students' learning processes have been significantly impacted by their living conditions, especially among those who have chosen English as their major. Students must, therefore, pay more attention to their living environments. Therefore, it may be concluded that they came from various backgrounds. While classroom practises vary from school to school, rural educators typically place a greater emphasis on grammar than on other skills.

Students come to class with a wide range of general writing skills and knowledge of effective general writing or study techniques.

To sum up, without access to formal education, individuals were more likely to struggle with academic writing in English. That's why it was taken so long to develop efficient methods for teaching academic English writing.

Figure 2. Students' year of learning English

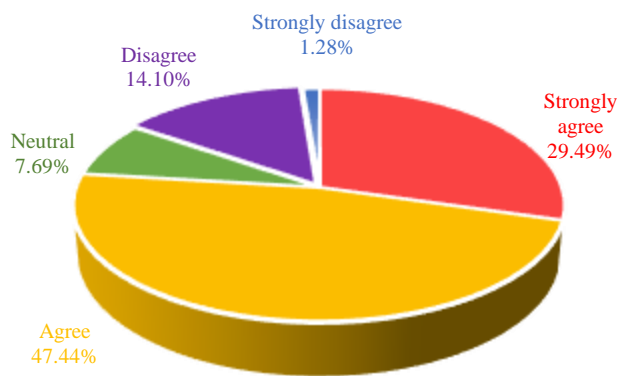


The graph illustrated that the number of students who have studied English for over 7 years accounted for 41.02%, and 58.97% of the students have only studied English for 1 to under 7 years. It means that a small minority of students do not have a high standard of English when they enter Tay Do University, so the fact that they choose English as their major is genuinely a big challenge. They do not keep up with the pace of studying with the others in their class. Contrarily, 41.02% of English major students study English from 7 years upward, which means they can communicate English well if they know their obstacles.

Regarding the remaining students who have only started learning English from 1 to below 7 years old, it will take them a long time and great efforts to keep up with the learning pace and improve their English-writing skills. In the pie chart, only 14.10% of participants have studied English for 10 years or more. It indicates that they have studied this language since elementary or secondary education and have spent more than ten years learning it prior to enrolling in college; however, it does not imply that they have great experience in English writing skills.

In addition to English, they learned a multitude of other subjects as part of their school curriculum during those years. So, their year of learning English had quite a big impact on their academic writing in English for their present study.

Figure 3. Students' rating for the importance of academic writing in English



The chart demonstrates that the majority of students always care about writing in English, notably academic writing. As can be seen from the data, the number of students who rate the importance of academic writing in English as positive amounted to over 76%. There was a growing tendency to be concerned about the significance of academic writing in English. Only more than 7% of the students get unbiased academic writing in English. The remainder, who show no attitude towards academic writing, are 15.38%. Normally, the majority of students consider that academic writing in English is essential.

If students do not recognize the importance of academic writing in English, they cannot better their writing skills. From a different perspective, academic writing is

essential for your complete professional and working existence. It promotes professionalism and gives the impression that you are a professional due to the numerous strict standards that make it formal. In addition, it helps develop your written communication skills, which are essential for career advancement. Today, the majority of careers necessitate proficient writing skills; consequently, most employers highly value these skills.

Figure 4. Students' ability in academic writing in English

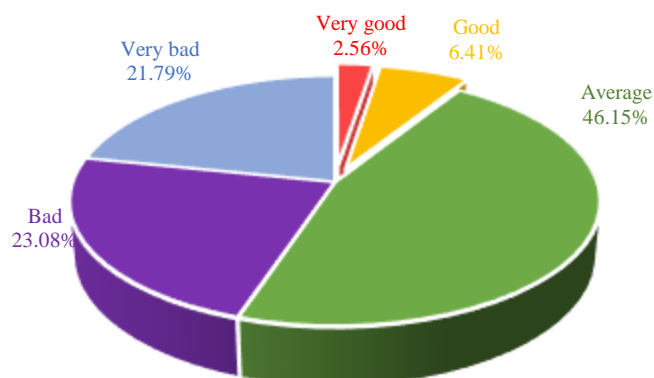


Figure 4 obviously shows the percentage of students who could write academically in English. Only 8.97% of the pupils had exceptional writing skills and exuded confidence in their abilities. Remarkably, the majority of students are average or poor at English acquisition. Over 46% of students believe that their academic writing skills in English are barely ordinary. Particularly, 44.87% of the students committed their mistakes while using academic writing skills in English. No one claims that they have never made errors or have seldom made mistakes in their English academic writing skills. In short, writing in an academic format is essential for academic performance and is necessary for self-disciplined study. When you write anything, you have capital, power, and agency in knowledge creation, identity construction, disciplinary practices, social standing, and professional advancement. This is because you have command over academic writing in an approachable English dialect. Furthermore, academic writing emphasizes method and how to use it to effectively communicate ideas. When students learn about style and how to write essays early in their academic careers, it will be much easier for them to compose papers throughout their university careers. If students realize their academic writing ability clearly, they will know how to improve and develop their own skills.

4.1.2 The importance of academic writing

Table 1. The importance of academic writing

Statements	SA	A	N	DA	SD
The importance of writing					
5. Academic writing is characterized by extensive research	42.31%	48.72%	8.97%	0%	0%

to develop excellent scholarly writing.					
6. Students engage in detailed research to ensure their essays and research papers are credible, and the arguments are supported by adequate literature.	42.31 %	51.28 %	6.41 %	0%	0%
7. English learners become proficient in finding the existing research gaps, and gain unmatched skills in collecting, analyzing, and presenting data which makes them outstanding researchers.	41.03 %	50%	8.97 %	0%	0%

In statement number 5, this argument is entirely convincing because a supplementary 91.03% of respondents (42.3% strongly agreed and 48.7% agreed) agreed that “*Academic writing is characterized by extensive research to develop excellent scholarly writing.*” The percentage of people who had strongly disagreeable ideas was 0%. Conversely, the extent of a neutral stance revealed was approximately 9%.

Regarding assertion number 6, 93.59% of seniors agreed on the importance of thorough research for their essays and papers. 51.28% concurred and 42.31% strongly concurred that the concepts outlined in their work should be validated through pertinent literature. In contrast, a mere 6.41% of participants maintained a neutral stance, while none expressed disagreement or strong disagreement.

With the response to statement number 7, the majority of students (91.03%) quite agreed that “*English learners become proficient in finding the existing research gaps and gain unmatched skills in collecting, analyzing, and presenting data, which makes them outstanding researchers,*” with 50% of participants who agreed and 41% who fully agreed. On the other side, the percentage of seniors choosing “disagreed” and “strongly disagreed” was 0%, whereas 9% of them showed neutrality.

The capacity to create communicative competence in writing is an important component of students’ language development and academic performance throughout all levels of school. Students’ ability to write well is often regarded as the single most crucial talent for their overall growth as individuals and for their continued success in school.

To look at it from a different perspective, academic writing is an important skill to have throughout your whole working and professional life. It encourages professionalism

by adhering to a number of stringent standards, which lends an air of formality to the situation and provides the appearance that you are an experienced professional. In addition to this, it assists in the development of your written communication abilities, which are essential for making progress in your job. As a result of the fact that today’s occupations demand good writing talents in almost all cases, most companies are looking for candidates with these skills.

4.1.3 Some major challenges in academic writing

a. Some common errors in grammar

Table 2. Some common errors in grammar

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
Some common errors in grammar					
8. I frequently apply simple sentence in academic writing instead of compound and complex sentence.	26.92 %	46.15 %	11.54 %	12.82 %	2.57%
9. I can use the various present tenses, pass tenses and future tenses correctly when you write.	33.33 %	39.74 %	11.54 %	15.39 %	0%
10. I am clearly understanding how to use relative-clause correctly when writing.	25.64 %	35.90 %	20.51 %	17.95 %	0%
11. I can use subject-verb agreement correctly when I write.	20.51 %	20.51 %	21.79 %	37.19 %	0%
12. Lacking preposition knowledge leads to misunderstanding and failure in expressing my ideas.	24.36 %	64.10 %	10.26 %	1.28%	0%
13. I can use the articles (a, an, the) correctly when you write.	24.36 %	47.44 %	14.10 %	14.10 %	0%

According to the aforementioned findings, a startlingly high percentage of students (73.07%) assume that they commonly use simple sentences in academic writing rather than compound and complex sentences in statement 8. Besides, the students claimed in claim 9 that they can correctly combine various present tenses, past tenses, and future tenses while writing, with 73.07% of participants concurring. With 61.54% and 41.02%, respectively, the seniors agreed with statements 10 and 11 that they fully grasp how to use relative

clauses effectively and can utilize subject-verb agreement correctly. 88.46% of them agreed that not acknowledging prepositions could result in misunderstandings and failure to effectively communicate their thoughts. With statement 13, 71.8% of participants considered that they could use the articles correctly when they wrote.

Moreover, grammar supports our communication. Knowing how it works helps us evaluate language’s meaning and efficacy. It can improve accuracy, detect ambiguity, and use English’s expressiveness. Grammar is considered as the language’s skeleton; hence students must be proficient in grammar to write successfully. Students regularly commit grammatical errors in their writing, including sentence structure, tenses, relative clauses, subject-verb agreement, prepositions, and articles. To summarize, grammar is an essential aspect of teaching and learning. Students can focus on grammar constructs if English learners want to write good essays.

b. Some common errors in vocabulary

Table 3. Some common errors in vocabulary

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
Some common errors in vocabulary					
14. I do not know the exact meaning of the words and how to use it in the context.	24.36 %	52.56 %	17.95 %	3.85 %	1.28 %
15. Poor vocabulary, I cannot express my ideas easily as usage of effective and precise language that conveys information.	26.92 %	57.69 %	7.69 %	5.13 %	2.57 %
16. I frequently apply awkward, vague, unclear and clichés word choice.	24.36 %	41.03 %	20.51 %	12.82 %	1.28 %

As noted in the chart, 76.92% of the seniors who majored in English agreed with statement 14 that they were unsure of the words' actual meanings and how to employ them in the context. Along with that, their biggest problem was a lack of vocabulary, as seen by the 84.61% responses in statement number 15. Students find it difficult to communicate their ideas when effective and precise language is used to do so. In response to statement 16, 65.39% of the participants said

they frequently use uncomfortable, nebulous, confusing, and clichéd wording. In conclusion, Tay Do University seniors who majored in English frequently encountered issues with word formation, meaning, and deficiency during the writing process. Vocabulary is a fundamental feature of writing since it helps readers understand what you are trying to convey. It’s a must for every language course worth its salt. Having a vast vocabulary, knowing its meaning, and understanding how to utilise it allows students to convey their thoughts rationally and clearly. Vocabulary also stands on its own as a meaningful component of language.

c. Some common errors in organization

Table 4. Some common errors in organization

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
Some common errors in organization					
17. It is uneasy for you to interpret the true meaning of the sentence, as you are unlikely to know how words coherent together.	28.21 %	56.41 %	10.26 %	5.13 %	0%
18. It finds difficult for you to get meaning because the sentence, has no cohesion.	33.33 %	57.69 %	7.69 %	1.29 %	0%
19. I am anxious that the sentence will become unintelligible due to a lack of sentences' cohesion.	25.64 %	61.54 %	11.54 %	0%	1.28 %

Based on the results in the statistics table, about 84.62% of seniors agreed with statement 17; they found that they were uneasy to interpret the true meaning of the sentence because the students are unlikely to know how words are coherent together. About the sentence cohesion, the students admitted that it is difficult for them to get meaning because the sentence has no cohesion, and they are anxious about the lack of sentence cohesion that will make the writing incoherent, with 91.02% in statement 18 and 87.18% in statement 19.

d. Some common errors in punctuation

Table 5. Some common errors in punctuation

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
Some common errors in punctuation					
20. I frequently apply the habit of indiscriminate capitalization in informal writing to academic writing.	16.67 %	35.9 %	8.97 %	28.21 %	10.25 %
21. I am confused about using “i.g” and “e.g” correctly in academic writing.	17.95 %	52.56 %	14.1 %	5.13 %	10.26 %
22. I feel confused about punctuation (,) vs (;), (‘...’) vs (“...”) correctly when used in academic writing.	17.95 %	39.74 %	17.95 %	16.67 %	7.69 %

From the information shown in this table, up to 52.57% of the students said that they frequently apply the habit of indiscriminate capitalization in informal writing to academic writing. Furthermore, the seniors were confused about using “i.g.” and “e.g.” and punctuation (,) vs. (;), (‘...’) vs. (“...”) correctly when used in academic writing, with 70.51% in statement 21 and 57.69% in statement 22. So, punctuation is also a problem that student should concern.

e. Lack of background knowledge

Table 6. Lack of background knowledge

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
Background knowledge					
23. Background knowledge in an essential component in the process of second or foreign language acquisition.	38.46 %	53.85 %	6.41 %	1.28 %	0%
24. It is very essential to have the good background knowledge in order to learn essay writing better.	40.03 %	50%	9.97 %	0%	0%
25. I am not confident in writing a new essay assignment because	26.92 %	57.69 %	8.97 %	3.85 %	2.5 7%

you do not have sufficient background knowledge of the topic that I am going to write about.					
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--	--	--	--	--

In statement 23rd, senior students believe that background knowledge is an essential component in the process of second or foreign language acquisition, with 92.31% of participants agreeing and 1.3% disagreeing, while the remainder of 6.4% had neutral ideas. As for statement 24 “It is very essential to have good background knowledge in order to learn essay writing better” 90.03% of seniors agreed. Also, 84.61% of them agreed with statement 25: “I am not confident in writing a new essay assignment because you do not have sufficient background knowledge of the topic that you are going to write about.”

To summarize, grammar structure, vocabulary, organization, punctuation, and background knowledge are really the challenges for students composing academic writing in English. To strengthen their writing skills, they should practice them more and more in order to develop a deep love for writing, and they should also broaden their experience in various fields of life.

4.2 Results of the interview

Interviews were conducted to collect more insightful information about the English majoring seniors’ challenges in academic writing in English. Consequently, the interviews were equally designed into two papers, namely seniors interview and teacher interview; there upon, they were revised and delivered to 15 seniors and 5 teachers. After assembling those papers, the research analyzed to examine whether students have encountered some problems in academic writing skills in English.

4.2.1 The seniors interview

The researcher came to the conclusion that there was some overlap with the questionnaire answers after carefully evaluating the fifteen English major senior interviews.

Firstly, every participant provided responses that were in line with the researcher’s expectations when asked about the importance of academic writing in English in their study process and in contemporary culture. All the group of students agreed that having strong academic writing abilities in English was not only valuable, but occasionally even required. They felt that writing academically helped them a lot in their learning process. In particular, academic writing provided a means for them to successfully apply the linguistic skills they had acquired to real-world situations. Students acknowledged that academic writing was a fundamental tool for communicating their thoughts or outlining specific problems. Also, ten students believed that having a strong academic writing ability enabled them to produce impressive curriculum vitae. They would greatly benefit if they were able to land suitable careers. Students claimed that academic writing served as an effective medium for indirect

communication in contemporary society. It involved putting vital information on paper that could not be spoken, displaying it, or storing it in letters. Several students believed that academic writing served as a means of communication between those in society and at work. Also, mastering writing abilities could demonstrate their aptitude.

Secondly, only three students responded that academic writing was not challenging when asked if they found it difficult. The reason these pupils were able to compose academic so simply was that they have been studying English writing for a very long time. Twelve pupils did, however, respond “yes.” This question was explained for a number of reasons. One student’s statement read, “Creating an academic essay required more than just putting thoughts on paper. It necessitated fusing a variety of components.” Another student added that because they lacked vocabulary, grammar, structures, and prior knowledge, it was challenging for them to produce sentences that were both grammatically and correctly while they were writing academically. Students actually mentioned a number of challenges that prevented them from academic writing. First, it was suggested that they were using incorrect structures and lacked vocabulary. The next issue was the challenge of organizing ideas. They claimed that because they lacked ideas for specific topics, their articles were frequently brief and unpersuasive. Finding some trustworthy reference materials proved challenging for the students.

Twelve out of fifteen students responded to the last question, “What obstacles have you faced in academic writing essays?” primarily mentioned grammar and vocabulary issues. They specifically mentioned that they frequently utilized non-grammatical structures and that, due to a lack of grammar expertise, they frequently employed some basic structures. They reported having issues picking appropriate words, misusing prepositions, utilizing the incorrect parts of speech, and not having the necessary vocabulary to explain their ideas. Students also struggled with prior knowledge, writing styles, and idea organization.

4.2.2 The teacher interview

The paper interview for teachers consists of three questions: how often do teachers apply academic writing in teaching English writing to their students; do they think academic writing is difficult or easy for students to understand and employ; and what are some problems that the teachers think their students frequently encounter in understanding and employing academic writing in English?

In question 1 “How often do you teach academic writing in English to your students?” 100% of the teachers (5/5) confirmed that they frequently teach academic writing in English to their students. In which three (3/5) teachers shared that they often teach academic writing in the teaching process. The remaining teachers said that they regularly use it in the process of teaching writing subjects 4 and 5. The audience for this academic writing style is only English-majored students, not non-English majored ones.

In the next question, “Do you think academic writing is difficult or easy for students to understand and employ?” One teacher (1/5) said that it is not very difficult if students know the tips. The remaining teachers (4/5) stated that it is not easy for students to understand academic writing because it requires a lot of things like organization, word choice, coherence, cohesion, etc.

Besides, the majored teachers also gave more common problems in question number 3 “What are some problems that you think your students frequently meet in understanding and employing academic writing in English?” All teachers who are invited to conduct interview questions have 13 to 23 years of experience teaching English at a university. They all share that the students try to write long and complex sentences, but it’s easy to fragment. They apply the paraphrasing rules to their writing, but they write redundant sentences. Their writings are good in the first stages, but have poor ideas later. Besides, the students cannot distinguish between academic and general forms. They have the habit of using daily conversations in academic writing. Moreover, they do not have enough academic vocabulary, grammar, format, or writing strategies.

Generally, teachers always find the suitable teaching methods to instruct their students. Though academic writing is not easy, teachers still apply academic writing in teaching English writing with the hope that all students will achieve the great skill in academic writing.

4.3 Discussion

The survey regarding the amount of time students spent learning English allows the researcher to assess the fundamentals of their abilities and knowledge during their writing. A few have completed 1 to 5 years of study. Some people have studied English for five to seven years or less. The remaining students have also been studying English for more than seven years. Although they believe their academic writing abilities are strong, they are unsure of how good their English is. They were good at talking and listening, but writing academically was difficult for them. Since academic writing is a difficult undertaking, students frequently focus on other abilities instead of writing, like listening and speaking. The research’s findings indicated that there were five important factors to consider: grammar, vocabulary, organization, punctuation, and background knowledge.

At first, when writing, the seniors sometimes lacked the necessary terminology. They found it challenging to clearly define their topics and identities. They will be confused when presented with fresh material. Students also have trouble using appropriate terminology in a variety of contexts. It is important to keep in mind the context’s numerous important collocations. More importantly, using grammar correctly became the most difficult component of writing essays. Incorrect English tenses and coherence run the danger of confusing or misleading the listener. Also, pupils had trouble with subject-verb agreement, which led to grammatical mistakes in their sentences. Furthermore, students found it

difficult to organize their ideas when writing academically. They either lacked understanding or did not know what they were talking about.

All things considered, English-majoring seniors at Tay Do University faced many difficulties in writing, including grammar, vocabulary, organization, punctuation, and background knowledge. To improve their academic writing skills, students must identify their challenges and devise effective solutions.

5. CONCLUSION

This chapter includes conclusion, limitations, implications and recommendations for further research.

5.1 Conclusions

After conducting this research and analyzing the important information collected from the seniors, the researcher finally figured out some common challenges in academic writing for English-majoring seniors at Tay Do University. Those factors were difficulties with grammar, vocabulary, organization, punctuation, and background knowledge.

This study was completed in 16 weeks. There were 78 English-majoring students in three classes, including English linguistics 14A, 14B, and 14C, at Tay Do University. The instruments used in this thesis were a survey questionnaire and interviews. The data from the survey questionnaires was statistically analyzed by Google Forms.

From these results, this research gives a summary of the study findings in relation to "*Common challenges in academic writing of English-majored seniors at Tay Do University.*" By doing this, this article will help the participants recognize the errors and know how to fix them.

5.2 Limitations

Despite the supervisor's, families', and friends' enthusiastic guidance and support, there are still certain constraints in this study that could have an impact on the outcomes. The researcher has never before conducted an actual study like this. The course will undoubtedly contain blunders due to time and knowledge constraints.

The magnitude of the study was the first restriction on this research. There were only 78 seniors with English majors who participated in the study, and they were only from three classes at Tay Do University: 14A, 14B, and 14C. Besides, it is difficult to collect the questionnaire because the time was short in the classrooms and the research subject's absence from school interferes with the data collection process. Therefore, the survey had to switch to an online questionnaire. This took a lot of time. Moreover, the subjects interviewed for this study had 5 majoring teachers. Therefore, the results of the research were as unstable as predicted.

Secondly, due to the limited time, the research was only completed within sixteen weeks for all the chapters. Moreover, this is the first time the researcher has carried out a thesis, and this topic was too new to do it as quickly as possible.

Finally, the researcher had some problems finding reference materials because there were very few studies related to speaking. However, the researcher strongly hopes that the study, in its scope, is able to contribute its usefulness to the English-majoring students at Tay Do University as well as non-English-majoring students as well.

5.3 Implications

The study has shown the significance of academic writing in schooling and the future of one's work. It also aids students in recognizing their writing challenges and finding ways to solve them, allowing them to develop their writing skills and write better. Teachers should also use the research findings to discover suitable teaching strategies and improve them so that students can improve their writing skills. Through the research results, the researcher would like to suggest some implications for teaching and learning academic writing skills for English-majored students at Tay Do University as the following ideas.

For teaching activity, this study may be significant for teachers and syllabus designers, as they should pay more attention to the instruction of writing skills and include much more practice on writing in their courses and textbook materials. So, teachers should make learners aware of the importance of academic writing for their academic work and give more exercises in this area.

For the learning process, the students should learn many useful new words in many contexts. Using a large dictionary is an effective way to increase vocabulary. Besides, the students should practice writing every day, starting with grammar exercises as much as possible, and try to apply grammatical structures to real-life situations. Moreover, the students should have a serious attitude when learning vocabulary, grammar, spend more time reading books. They should explore, select and create their own way of learning so that academic writing skills becomes more interesting and useful.

First, learning new words is essential to improving students' listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, especially academic writing skill. Students who do not take the time to build a large vocabulary may never reach their full potential in school, and they may even lose interest in using language altogether.

Second, grammar is the study of language and how words are combined to produce sense. It helps readers understand academic writing essays. It helps students convey meaning to the audience. Tenses, part of speech, word order, and prepositions are common grammatical mistakes in student writing. They must write logically. English learners may misinterpret sentences if they utilize the improper tenses.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on this study, other researchers will do further studies with the other students studying English or other majors regarding their challenges in learning to write academically. Researchers may also use this analysis to complement and refine their studies while looking at other challenges in the

process of learning English. As a result, students may consider their problems in the study's findings as well as identify a suitable solution to their dilemma.

REFERENCES

A. *Referencea from books*

1. Aarts, B. (2011). Oxford modern English grammar. Oxford University Press.
2. Al Mubarak, A. (2017). An investigation of Academic Writing problems Level Faced by Undergraduate students at AL Imam AL Mahdi University - Sudan. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, 5(2), 175-188
3. Alice Oshima, Ann Hogue (2007). Introduction to academic writing (3th edition). New York: Pearson Longman.
4. Biber, D., Johansson, S., Leech, G., Conrad, S., & Finegan, E. (1999). Longman grammar of written and spoken English. Pearson.
5. Caplan, N. A. (2012). Grammar choices for graduate and professional writers. University of Michigan Press.
6. Dang Thi Hanh, Chau Thanh Hai and Tra To Quyen (2020). A study on the difficulties in writing argumentative essays of English-majored sophomores at Tay Do University.
7. Fadhel, A. (2019). Writing Challenges Among Secondary School Students. *Altarbawi Journal*, 3(1), 23-43.
8. James, D. (2005). The teacher's Grammar Book. Soka University. Lawrence Erlbaum. Associates.
9. Nguyen Hiep Thanh Nga, Pham Thu Uyen and Phan Thi Minh Uyen, (2020). Difficulties in writing essays of English-majored sophomores at Tay Do University.
10. Oshima, A. and Hogue, A. (2006). Writing Academic English (4th edition). New York: Pearson Longman.
11. Phan Thi Minh Uyen, Nguyen Thi Thuy Hang, and Le Thanh Trung (2020). A survey on the difficulties in writing essays of English majored sophomores at Tay Do University.
12. Phillips, J. D. (1979). The essay writing skills of undergraduate students. University of Canterbury.
13. Scott Thornbury (2002, p.33). How to teach vocabulary. *TEXTBookAMAZING*.
14. Sperling, Melanie, and Freedman, Sarah Warshauer (2001). Research on Writing. *Handbook of Research on Teaching* (4th edition) ed. Virginia Richardson. New York: American Educational Research Association.
15. Tribble, C. (1996). Writing. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
16. William, J. (2005:2). Teaching writing in a second and foreign language classroom. Boston: McGraw Hill.

B. *References from the Internet*

1. Anderson, S., & Anderson, S. (2022). How to Use Articles in Academic Writing Trinka. Retrieved from: <https://www.trinka.ai/blog/how-to-use-articles- in-academic-writing/>
2. Brink, S. (2023, February 8). The Importance of Writing Skills. EPALÉ - European Commission. Retrieved from: <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/blog/importance-writing-skills>
3. Bryson, S. (2023, April 04). Verb Tenses in Academic Writing | Rules, Differences & Examples. Scribbr. Retrieved May 19, 2023, from: <https://www.scribbr.com/verbs/tenses/>
4. Forming sentences with subject-verb agreement. (n.d.). Students. Retrieved from: <https://students.unimelb.edu.au/academic-skills/resources/grammar/forming- sentences-with-subject-verb-agreement>
5. Lyons, D. (2021, March 10). How Many People Speak English, And Where Is It Spoken? Babel Magazine. Retrieved from: <https://www.babel.com/en/magazine/how-many-people-speak-english-and- where-is-it-spoken>
6. Relative Clauses- Effective Writing Practices Tutorial - Northern Illinois University. (n.d.). Northern Illinois University. Retrieved from: <https://www.niu.edu/writingtutorial/grammar/relative-clauses.shtml>
7. Team, A. (2023, April 10). Subject-Verb Agreement: Definition, Examples, & Exercises| Albert.io. Albert Resources. Retrieved from: <https://www.albert.io/blog/subject-verb-agreement/>
8. The Three Common Tenses Used in Academic Writing. (n.d.). The Writing Center. Retrieved from: <https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/writing-resources/grammar-style/the-three-common-tenses-used-in-academic-writing>
9. Wikipedia contributors. (2023). English articles. Wikipedia. Retrieved from: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English-articles>
10. Wikipedia contributors. (2023). English prepositions. Wikipedia. Retrieved from: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English-prepositions>
11. Word Form [wf]. (n.d.). UCI School of Humanities. Retrieved from: <https://www.humanities.uci.edu/word-form-wf>