

An investigation into students' perceptions towards Academic Writing at the faculty of education of Tripoli university in Libya.

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ملخص الدراسة

لا زالت الكتابة الأكاديمية في ليبيا تشكل قلق كبير لدى طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية كلفة انجليزية. في الواقع أن معظم دورات اللغة الإنجليزية المقدمة في الجامعات تتركز على تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية لأغراض عامة والقليل فقط من تلك المؤسسات تهدف الى تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية لأغراض أكاديمية لطلبة اللغة الإنجليزية كلفة اجنبية. لذلك فإن هذه الدراسة البحثية حاولت التحقق من اراء الطلبة ازاء الكتابة الأكاديمية المقدمة في كلية التربية بجامعة طرابلس ليبيا. تم استخدام استبيان واجري على 40 طالب متخصصون في اللغة الإنجليزية في الفصل الاخير من الدراسة. أظهرت نتائج هذه الدراسة ان أغلبية طلبة البكالوريوس لم يدرسوا مهارات البحث الأكاديمي ضمن دورات الكتابة الأكاديمية. كما أظهرت الدراسة ان المهارات الكتابة الأكاديمية الصعبة التي وجدوها الطلبة كانت تلك التي تم دراستها بشكل قليل جدا. ايضا اظهرت نتائج الدراسة ان معظم مواد تدريس الكتابة الأكاديمية الفعالة والمفيدة وطرق واساليب التعلم لم يتم تضمينها في دورات تدريس الكتابة الأكاديمية للطلبة. على هذا الاساس اقترحت الدراسة ضرورة تدريس مهارات البحث الأكاديمي و انواعها ضمن المقررات الدراسية للكتابة الأكاديمية لطلبة اللغة الإنجليزية كلفة اجنبية في الجامعات.

Abstract

In Libya, academic writing is perceived as a big issue for EFL students in the EFL context. As a matter of fact, most English courses offered at the university level focus on teaching English for general purposes and very few aim to teach writing for academic purposes for EFL English students.. Therefore, this small-scale research study attempted to investigate students' perceptions towards academic writing taught at the faculty of education of Tripoli university in Libya. A questionnaire was conducted on 40 EFL students majoring in English in their final semester of their study. The findings of the study indicated that the majority of BA undergraduate students never took academic research skills in their academic writing course before and that the academic writing skills students found difficult were those less frequently taught. The results of the study also found that most useful academic writing teaching materials and teaching tasks & activities were not provided in the students' academic writing course nor they were regarded as effective in their academic writing course. As a result, the study suggested that EFL students should be offered an academic writing course with academic research skills and generic features to EFL university students.

Key words: EFL, EAP, EGP, Academic writing, learning needs, writing proficiency.

1.Introduction

The ability to write academically at university levels is a higher expectation of university students. Very often students develop their academic writing through formal class room instruction, despite the fact that the academic writing proficiency could be influenced by students' internal cognitive and mental development, language learning experiences and their proficiency in L2. With respect to L1 students, Hinkel, (2004) stated that L1 students are still poor at academic writing skills, in spite of the fact that they have productive knowledge of vocabulary required at the university levels and they are grammatically more fluent than L2 students. Therefore, the ability to write academically requires students not only compose an essay but their ability to develop and analyze ideas as well as the ability to rephrase or transform information in the form of narratives, or into new texts as in argumentative writing .

University students in EFL contexts often encounter greater difficulty in learning academic writing due to the gap between their insufficient mastery of L2 English academic literacies and their L1 academic writing literacies. In Libya, while many universities are trying to focus on teaching English for academic purposes to bridge this wide gap, but few of them still teach writing for general purposes for EFL English departments. Over the past few years, few institutions have established English language centres to teach English for academic purposes as those in English speaking countries. However, The majority of the Libyan universities offer English for general language courses, employing a textbook or teaching materials oriented for EGP, i.e. English for general purposes. The reason for this could be due to university policies or large class size or old fashioned-teaching materials and the instructional methodologies employed, where the focus is always on grammar and vocabulary learning. As a result, Libyan students are frequently reported to gain high scores on grammar-based tests but fail to write academic English essays in English. In a study by Xu (2005) found that most EFL Chinese students preferred to focus on writing handbooks or imitating the format of some research articles by copying certain structures when necessary in order to write academic papers.

Despite the fact that academic writing courses are given in a few Libyan universities, they are constantly reported to be teacher-centred. In other words, university lectures were only devoted to few academic writing skills such as research paper format or the essay layout being taught, while the teaching of some academic writing skills and language genres has been left behind. literature on academic writing also found that for students who are willing to enter university, the key for academic success is mainly dependent on successful academic writing (Kelley, 2008). There is no doubt that

academic writing is the language of scholarship and grants students the eligibility of higher education abroad. The quality of a student's written work determines his/her scholarship and acceptance in academia and that poor academic writing skills have been considered as an indication in the failure for EFL international students in meeting institutional literacy expectations (Bacha, 2002; Zhu, 2004). Therefore, after university graduation, some students who wish to apply for a study abroad do not seem to have the academic writing proficiency to write academic papers and as a result the Libyan ministry of education grant students who want to further their study abroad one more year to take a pre-sessional English course in EAP before they enter an English speaking university due to their low proficiency in academic writing since most universities in USA or UK require international students to write undergraduate or graduate academic papers and dissertations in English if they do not meet the IELTS test requirements. Therefore, most of the Libyan universities should take the initiative to replace the old-fashioned textbooks and the existing courses with modern ones as those in USA or UK. Libyan students thus feel disappointed towards their academic writing level after graduation and will have to encounter a gap between what was taught at their university and what he/she is going to do when they are required to write their assignments in English .

2.Literature Review

2.1.Academic Writing

Academic writing is that typical type of writing which uses a more formal tone and follows specific standards through an engagement with existing scholarly standards following conventional citing or referencing of other authors' academic work that confirms the writer's participation in the discourse community. Academic writing follows the same style, content, and organization that may vary from one genre to another. Although academic writing shares some common features including a commitment to intellectual integrity, however, the advancement of knowledge, and the application of disciplinary methodologies may be different.

Academic writing contains different genres, involving different types of authors, readerships and tasks practiced in the academy as well as various types of messages among different people in the academy.

However, the importance of academic writing, in non-English speaking countries, has become increasingly dominant in both educational and professional writing setting .

Academic writing is important for students especially in tertiary levels. Grabe & Kaplan (1996) pointed out that in the academic settings, writing skills are seen in all forms of compositions

containing various kinds of writing, such as narrative and descriptive analytical writing or argumentative writing. Academic writing requires composing skills which transform information and writing does many of the things that creative writing does not by which it has its own conventions and standards. Academic writing involves certain rules and practices to be organized around a formal order or structure to present ideas and to ensure that these ideas are backed up by other authors' citations in the literature.

In this respect, academic writing is different and unique in nature and its structure requires such as a beginning, a body or middle, and an ending, that is typical of an essay format, as well as other assignment writing layouts.

Oshima, A. & Hogue, A., (2007) suggested that If you make judgment about something in academic writing, there is an expectation that a researcher will support another researcher's opinion by linking it to what that author has previously written about the issue. This suggestion supports that argument that academic writing is different from creative writing and personal writing which are informal as writing stories or writing letters or e-mails to friends and family typically using slang language or abbreviations and incomplete sentences that are typical in academic writing.

In this regard, Wennerstrom (2003) states that academic writing is distinguished by its formality that involves frequent nominalizations, parallel structures and sentential organization in a specific genre.

There are various types of research skills included in academic writing that are important for tertiary level EFL students, such as, citing, referencing, developing an argument, summarizing & paraphrasing etc. Academic writing is extensively used in higher educational institutions and research centers . It is mostly used for publishing research works that are read by teachers and researchers. Academic writing may include any writing assignment task presented in academic setting such as research papers, book reviews, essays, conference papers, academic journals, , thesis, dissertation, etc. Academic writing requires writers to elaborate, explain, describe and to provide information about certain topics pertaining to certain academic discourse.

Academic writing is arguably the most important skill to be learnt in the EFL academic contexts since it is the main method of academic communication to transfer information in the broader discourse community yet it is also the most difficult skill for most EFL students to be mastered.

In this respect, most research studies revealed that students in higher education reported to have experienced problems writing their Bachelor of Arts (BA) theses or MA dissertations in proper academic writing styles. Most greater difficulties students experienced included their inability to

express their ideas in academic English due to the lack of guidance on searching for proper references or that they were unaware of the thesis layout or research paper format.

For instance, a study by Torrance and Thomas (1992) found that although there are many scholarly students have writing abilities that may reflect those of productive academics, there is a significant minority that finds the academic writing difficult for them resulting in real problems for them to complete their university degrees. In addition, Torrance and Thomas(1992) found that the students' real problems in their academic writing were about clarity, flow, fact development, grammatical errors, text structure and redundancy.

In another study by Sun (2004) which was conducted to investigate 52 colleges and universities found that around 16% of these institutions taught academic writing courses for students majoring in English and his study revealed that 15% of students were never offered academic writing as undergraduates.

Therefore, EFL students need to develop their academic research skills, such as summarizing and paraphrasing information, and using a direct quotation with an accurate referencing system in order to deal with the difficulties they come across and to minimize these problems (Abdulkareem, 2013). Based on the research literature presented above, it can be interpreted that effective academic writing seems to be a very important skill for every university student as most of the assessment methods used in higher education focus not only on the quality of information, but also on how it is presented academically (Dudu & Subanda 2012).

2.2. Needs Analysis

Needs analysis is the process of identifying students' needs and is the most important step in developing an appropriate specialized English syllabus for a particular course as stated by most researchers (e.g., Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Hyland, 2006; West, 1994). Needs analysis according to Nunan (1988) is defined as a vital asset for teachers of ESP in order to obtain an idea about what their learners need, lack, or want to reach their target goals.

NA has been described by (Hutchinson, 1987) as the most appropriate method as it is used to evaluate the how and what of a course and can tell us a lot about the nature and content of the learners' target language needs. In general, in NA, the course designers and materials developers have to collect information about students' present and target situations (Dudley Evans & St. John, 1998) through present situation analysis (PSA) and target situation analysis (TSA). Therefore,

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) proposed a TSA and PSA framework which was adopted for the purpose of the present study.

Hutchinson & Waters (1987) classify needs into learning needs and target needs. Learning needs are described as what the learner needs to do in order to learn. They proposed three types of target needs: necessities are the needs that are determined by the target situation, lacks are determined by comparing both the current status and the target level of learners, and wants are determined by the insiders that are learners and outsiders that are experts, teachers, trainers involved in the process of learning.

However, there have been a few large-scale empirical NA studies conducted in the EFL contexts at tertiary institutions include Hyland (1997), Little wood and Liu (1996), and Evans and Green (2007).

For example, a study in Taiwan by Liu, Chang, Yang, and Sun (2011) to explore EFL students' needs in English for General Purposes and English for Academic Purposes with respect to the students perceptions of three types of needs revealed some differences between the students perceptions of needs and their actual course program , therefore, it can be argued that needs analysis is a complex, multiple, and controversial concept.

Although, most survey questionnaires provided a general picture of university students' proficiency in all four English macro skills while very few studies investigated the form and quality of academic writing courses offered.

Therefore, this study mainly aims at investigating the learning and target needs considering the objectives of the research. Thus, the goal of this study is to investigate academic writing in particular. Also, an attempt will be made to investigate students' attitudes towards learning academic writing, their current proficiency in some academic writing skills, their greatest difficulties in learning academic writing, and their perceptions about the teaching methods & activities and teaching materials used in their previous academic writing courses.

This study will ,therefore, answer the following research questions:

1. What are BA students' perceptions of the importance of academic writing to their current studies and future career?
2. What are the BA students' perceptions of the difficulties of academic writing skills?

3. What are the students' perceptions about the teaching methods & materials used for academic writing courses?

3.Methodology

The main purpose of this study was to investigate students' perceptions towards academic writing throughout their study at the faculty of education.

3.1.Participants and setting

Participants of this study were a group of 40 BA students in their final semester at the faculty of education of Tripoli university in Libya. The EFL students were available at the end of the course and were willing to fill in the survey questionnaire. The undergraduate students were about to obtain their bachelor's degrees from the university with similar backgrounds whose perceptions were investigated and offered rich information about their previous academic writing courses. This group of students was selected based on two criteria: first, they were the same group who had finished their academic writing courses and were about to graduate, and second, this group of students were targeted in order to investigate target situation needs for learning academic writing for future publishing and future careers. However, up to the researcher's knowledge, there has been no academic writing course per se for EAP purposes offered for undergraduate students in this university. The teachers and instructors at the faculty of education believe that EFL students are able to acquire academic writing skills by themselves through the English teaching materials available to them despite that fact that most teaching materials used were designed for general purposes such the New Head Way Course book. They also claimed that what students need are the research methods that can help them understand the format and the contents of research paper writing or essay writing layout. Therefore, it can be argued that academic language does not have to be explicitly taught since students need to engage in the learning process to generate their ideas implicitly. Thus undergraduate students were found to have very little experience in academic writing who needed to write their BA theses in English after they finished their university courses.

3.2.Data Collection instrument

The investigation into the students' perceptions about academic writing was undertaken at the end of the course in the form of summative evaluation. The aim was to gather information about the existing academic writing course and students' attitudes about the previous academic writing courses they had taken via a survey questionnaire. Quantitative research, according to, Rao &

Woolcock, 2003) relies heavily on numbers and is used to measure the levels and changes in impacts.

3.3. Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire items were developed according to Hutchinson and Waters' (1987) framework of NA. These items were divided into six parts (see Appendix). Part 1 (necessities) was concerned about investigating students' perceptions about the importance of learning academic writing and their interest in learning academic writing. Parts 2 & 3 (lacks) were to assess students' perceptions about the level difficulty and ease of 20 important academic writing skills adapted from Evans & Green, (2007). Parts 4, 5 & 6 (wants) were to investigate the students' perceptions about previous academic writing courses and the effectiveness of the teaching activities and materials used. The questionnaire took about 30 minutes to complete.

3.4. Theoretical framework

For the purpose of the study, an attempt was made to design a questionnaire on the basis of the theoretical framework proposed by (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Hyland, 2006) who proposed a target situation analysis framework that consists primarily of the following questions:

- Why are the learners taking the course?
- How do the learners learn?
- What resources are available?
- Who are the learners?
- Where will the ESP course take place?
- When will the ESP course take place?

(Hutchinson & Waters, 1987)

3.5. Questionnaire development

This study makes use of a student Questionnaire which was developed to obtain quantitative information via students perceptions. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions grouped in six parts: Part1 was about the importance of academic writing. Part 2 was about the need to include text types in the academic writing course. Part 3 was about the level of difficulty & ease of

academic writing skills. Part 4 was about the frequency of including academic writing skills in their previous academic writing course. Part 5 was about the effectiveness of teaching materials used in their academic writing course. Part 6 was about the teaching activities & tasks provided in their academic writing course . Students were asked to complete the questionnaire by indicating their perceptions with statements on a five-point Likert scale.

The questionnaire in this study was developed based on the relevant NA literature namely (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Hyland, 2006). The questionnaire was first piloted and administered with EAP content teachers to obtain their views about students' target academic English needs, their current level of academic writing proficiency and some other EAP aspects. To ensure maximum clarity on the part of the participants, the questionnaire was translated into Arabic which is the participants' native language. later, questionnaire was submitted to two ELT teachers and two psychology professors to further check for clarity, content-relatedness, and format. Before collecting the data, the questionnaire was pretested on some students and as a result some ambiguities and irrelevances were modified accordingly and finally the reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed.

A target situation analysis of learning needs(Hutchinson and Waters (1987)

<p>Why is the language needed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for study; • for work; • for training; • for a combination of these; • for some other purpose, e.g. status, examination, promotion. <p>How will the language be used?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • medium: speaking, writing, reading, etc. • channel: e.g. telephone, face-to-face; • types of text or discourse: e.g. academic texts, lectures, informal conversations, technical manuals, catalogues. <p>What will the content areas be?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • subjects: e.g. medicine, biology, architecture, shipping, commerce, engineering; • level: e.g. technician, craftsman, postgraduate, secondary school <p>Who will the learners use the language with?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • native speakers or non-native; • level of knowledge of receiver: e.g. expert, layman, student; • relationship: e.g. colleague, teacher, customer, superior, subordinate.. <p>Where will the language be used?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical setting: e.g. office, lecture, theatre, hotel, workshop, library; • human context: e.g. alone, meetings, demonstrations, on telephone; • linguistic context: e.g. in own country, abroad. <p>When will the language be used?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concurrently with ESP course or subsequent? • Frequently, seldom, in small amount, in large chunks. 	<p>Why are the learners taking the course?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compulsory or optional; • apparent need or not; • are status, money, promotion involved? • What the learners think they will achieve? • What is their attitude towards the ESP course? Do they want to improve their English or do they resent the time they have to spend on it? <p>How do the learners learn?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is their learning background? • What is their concept of teaching and learning? • What methodology will appeal to them? • What sort of techniques are likely to bore alienate them? <p>What resources are available?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number and professional competence of teachers; • attitude of teachers to ESP; • teacher's knowledge and attitude to the subject content; • materials; • aids; • opportunities for out of class activities <p>Who are the learners?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • age / sex/ nationality; • What do they already know about English? • What subject knowledge do they have? • What are their interests? • What is their socio-cultural background? • What teaching styles are they used to? • What is their attitude to English or to the cultures of the English-speaking world? <p>Where will the ESP course take place?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the surroundings pleasant, dull, noisy, cold, etc? <p>When will the ESP course take place?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • time of day; • every day / once a week; • full-time / part-time; • concurrent with need or pre-need
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Students Questionnaire

Part 1. Your opinions about the importance of academic writing skills.

1). In your view, how important do you think academic writing skills are in your current studies and future career. Please indicate your choice as follows: 1=Highly important ,2= Important, 3=Moderately important, 4= Of Little Importance , 5=Unimportant

	1.Highly important	2.Importat	3.Moderately Important	4.Of Little Importance	5.Unimportant
1) In your view, how important is academic writing for your undergraduate study?	N=36 90%	N=4 10%	N=0	N=0	N=0
2) In your view, how important is academic writing is for your future career?	N-21 52%	N-8 20%	N=5 12.5%	N=6 15%	N=0
3) In your view, how important is academic writing for your work to be published.?	N=9 22%	N=5 12.5 %	N=3 7.5%	N=18 45%	N=9 22%
	1.very interested	2.intersted	3.fairly interested	4of little interest	5.unintersted
4). How interested are you in academic writing? Please indicate your interest from 1=very interested to 5= not interested.	N=24 60%	N=8 20%	N=5 12.5%	N=3 7.5%	N=0

Part 2: your opinions about the need to include text types in your academic writing course.

2): In your view, how helpful are the following text types to be included in your academic writing course? Please indicate your preference 1 to 5 as follows: 1.Extremely helpful, 2.very helpful,3. somewhat helpful, 4.not so helpful,5 not at all helpful					
	1.Extremely helpful	2.very helpful	3. somewhat helpful	4.not so helpful	5 not at all helpful
1) Research papers	N=37 92%	3 7.55	N=0	N=0	N=0
2) Formal reports	N=29 72%	N=7 17.5%	N=4 10%	N=0	N=0
3) Research abstracts	N=31 77.5%	N=8 20%	N=1	N=0	N=0
4) Research proposals	N=33 82.5%	N=5 12.5%	N=2 5%	N=0	N=0
5) Summaries	N=32 80%	N=8 20%	N=0	N=0	N=0
6) Essays	N=34 85%	N=5 12.5%	N=1	N=0	N=0
7) Academic Reviews	N=21 52.5%	N=9 22.5%	N=5 12.5%	N=5 12.5%	N=0
8) Academic Articles	N=30 75%	N=6 15%	N=4 10%	N=0	N=0
9) Critiques	N=0	N=12 30%	N=5 12.5%	N=23 57.5%	N=0
10) Research studies	N=32 80%	N=8 20%	N=0	N=0	N=0

Part 3. Your opinions about the difficulty/ ease of Academic Writing Skills

3):In your view, how difficult or easy the following academic writing skills are. Please indicate 1-5 as follows: 1=Very difficult, 2=difficult, 3= Slightly difficult, 4= easy, 5= very easy					
	1=very difficult	2=difficult	3=slightly difficult	4=easy	5=very easy
1).Writing introductions & conclusions	N=3 7.5%	N=9 22.5%	N=13 32.5%	N=15 37.5%	N=0
2) Writing literature review	N=0	N=7 17.5%	N=16 40%	N=17 42.5%	N=0
3) Referring to previous studies	N=0	N=7 17.5%	N=21 52.5%	N=12 30%	N=0
4) Reviewing and critiquing previous studies	N=31 77.5%	N=7 17.5%	N=2 5%	N=0	N=0
5) Formulating research methods	N=23 57.5%	N=12 30%	N=5 12.5%	N=0	N=0
6) Evidence back-up & plagiarism avoidance	N=19 49.5%	N=16 40%	N=5 12.5%	N=0	N=0
7) Summarizing and presenting the findings	N=17 42.5%	N=15 37.5%	N=5 12.5%	N=3 7.5%	N=0
8) Discussing the research findings	N=17 43.5%	N=18 45%	N=5 12.5%	N=0	N=0
9). Reflective Writing (Analyzing & examining your work)	N=11 27.5%	N=12 30%	N=14 35%	N=3 7.5%	N=0
10) Quoting sources & bibliography	N=7 17.5%	N=12 30%	N=17 43.5%	N=4 10%	N=0
11) Developing an argument	N=22 55%	N=15 37.5%	N=3 7.5%	N=0	N=0

12) Proof-reading skills	N=15 37.5%	N=21 52.5%	N=4 10%	N=0	N=0
13) Distinguishing between different language features of the academic genre, i.e, descriptive, analytical, persuasive and critical .	N=21 52.5%	N=17 43.5%	N=2 5%	N=0	N=0
14). Planning, structuring and editing your work	N=2 5%	N=11 27.5%	N=12 30%	N=15 37.5%	N=0
15) Writing the appropriate lexical sentences	N=2 5%	N=11 27.5%	N=13 32.5%	N=14 35%	N=0
16) Summarizing & paraphrasing a text/idea	N=3 7.5%	N=9 22.5%	N=16 40%	N=12 30%	N=0
17) Writing coherent paragraphs appropriately	N=7 17.5%	N=8 20%	N=13 32.5%	N=12 30%	N=0
18) Linking sentences logically	N=6 15%	N=9 22.5%	N=14 35%	N=11 27.5%	N=0
19) writing appropriate academic language styles	N=3 7.5%	N=12 27.5%	N=16 40%	N=9 22.55	N=0
20) Using correct grammar, punctuation and spelling	N=0	N=10 24%	N=12 27.5%	N=16 40%	N=2 5%

Part 4. Your opinions on previous Academic writing course

4):In your view, how frequently were the following academic writing skills included in your academic writing course? please Indicate your choice from 1 to 5, as follows: (5) Always, (4)very frequently, (3)Sometimes, (2)Rarely (1) Never					
	1 never	2= Rarely	3=Some times	4- very frequently	5 Always
1). Writing introductions & conclusions	N=0	N=4 10%	N=13 32.5 %	N=17 42.5%	N=6 15%
2) Writing literature review	N=0	N=3 7.5%	N=19 47.5 %	N=11 27.5%	N=7 17.5 %

3) Referring to previous studies	N=9 22.5%	N=16 40%	N=7 17.5 %	N=5 12.5%	N=3 7.5%
4) Reviewing and critiquing previous studies	N=17 42.5%	N=12 30%	N=6 15%	N=5 12.5%	N=0
5) Formulating research methods	N=15 37.5%	N=12 30%	N=9 22.5 %	N=4 10%	N=0
6) Evidence back-up & plagiarism avoidance	N=13 32.5%	N=11 27.5%	N=7 17.5 %	N=6 15%	N=3 7.5%
7) Summarizing and presenting the findings	N=14 35%	N=10 25%	N=9 22.5 %	N=7 17.55	N=0
8) Discussing the research findings	N=12 30%	N=13 32.5%	N=9 22.5 %	N=6 15%	N=0
9). Reflective Writing (Analyzing & examining your work)	N=14 35%	N=9 22.5%	N=10 25%	N=6 15%	N=1 2.5%
10) Quoting sources & bibliography	N=0	N=9 22.5%	N=13 32.5 %	N=11 27.5%	N=7 17.5 %
11) Developing an argument	N=17 42.5%	N=15 37.5%	N=4 10%	N=4 10%	N=0
12) Proof-reading skills	N=16 40%	N=10 25%	N=8 20%	N=6 15%	N=0
13) Distinguishing between different language features of the academic genre, i.e., descriptive, analytical, persuasive and critical .	N=17 42.5%	N=12 30%	N=6 15%	N=5 12,5%	N=0
14). Planning structuring and editing your work	N=0	N=5 12,5%	N=11 27.5 %	N=15 37.5%	N=9 22.5 %
15) Writing the appropriate lexical sentences	N=2 5%	N=5 12,5%	N=13 32,5 %	N=14 35%	N=6 15%
16) Summarizing & paraphrasing a text/idea	N=2 5%	N=6 15%	N=9 22.5 %	N=15 37.5%	N=8 20%
17) Writing coherent paragraphs appropriately	N=0	N=5 12,5%	N=11 27.5 %	N=15 37.5%	N=9 22.5 %

18) Linking sentences logically	N=4 10%	N=6 15%	N=10 25%	N=14 35%	N=6 15%
19) Writing appropriate academic language styles	N=11 27.5%	N=13 32.5%	N=9 22.5 %	N=7 17.5%	N=0
20) Using correct grammar, punctuation and spelling	N=0	N=6 15%	N=8 20%	N=17 42.5%	N=9 22.5 %

Part 5. Your opinions about the effectiveness of teaching materials used in your academic writing course

5): In your view, how effective were the following teaching materials for you in your academic writing course? Please indicate the following from 1 to 5:as follows: 1 - very effective, 2.effective, 3-quite effective ,4- ineffective, 5 - not like it					
	1 - very effective	2. effective	3 - quite effective	4.ineffective	.not like it5
1)The core writing textbook	0N= 0%	12 N= 30%	16 N= 40%	7 N= 17.5%	5 N= 12.5 %
2)The supplementary hand-outs	0 N= 0%	5 N= 12.5%	9 N= 22.5%	20 N= 50%	6 N= 15%
3) Additional materials such as phrase banks and phrasebooks.	17 N= 42%	12 N= 30%	8 N= 20%	3 N= 7.5%	0 N= 0%
4) Previous models of research papers	11 N= 27.5%	14 N= 35%	8 N= 20%	5 N= 12.5%	2 N= 5%
5) Academic word lists such as learning academic vocabulary	N=8 20%	N=13 32.5%	N=15 37.5%	N=6 15%	N=0

Part6: Your opinions about teaching activities provided in your academic writing course.

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6): In your view, how true were the following teaching tasks & activities provided in your academic writing course? Please indicate your choice from 1 to 5, as follows: (5) Always True, (4)Mostly True, (3)Sometimes True, (2)Rarely True and (1) Never True.

	1- Never True	2- Rarely True	3- Sometimes True	4- Mostly True	5- Always True
1). Working with peers for generating ideas	N=14 35%	N=11 27.5%	N=9 22.5%	N=6 15%	N=0
2). Working individually for writing assignments	N=0	N=7 17.5%	N=8 20%	N=12 27.5%	N=13 32.5%
3). Giving oral presentations	N=18 45%	N=12 30%	N=6 15%	N=4 10%	N=0
4). Doing brainstorming activities before writing	N=4 10%	N=9 22.5%	N=11 27.5%	N=10 25%	N=7 17.5%
5). Doing Academic grammar exercises	N=0	N=4 10%	N=14 35%	N=13 32,5%	N=9 22.5%
6). Doing Academic vocabulary exercises	N=1 2.5%	N=3 7.5%	N=9 22.5%	N=16 40%	N=11 27.5%
7). Doing Academic writing Exercises	N=0	N=7 17.5%	N=11 27.5%	N=14 35%	N=8 20%
8). Doing Academic reading exercises	N=0	N=6 15%	N=8 20%	N=11 27.5%	N=15 37.5%
9). Reading and analysing authentic research papers	N=17 42.5%	N=11 27.5%	N=7 17.5%	N=5 12.5%	N=0
10). Doing peer-corrections & self-assessment activities	N=20 50%	N=8 20%	N=9 22.5%	N=3 7.5%	N=0
11). Doing essay drafting activities	N=4 10%	N=11 27.5%	N=13 32.5%	N=12 30%	N=0

12). Academic writing tasks were enjoyable	N=21 52.5%	N=12 27.5%	N=5 12.5%	N=2 5%	N=0
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4. Results and Discussion

Part 1. Students perceptions about the importance of academic writing.

Research Question 1 regarding the importance of learning academic writing for BA undergraduate students as well as their interest: the data obtained in Part 1 of the questionnaire revealed that the majority of students believed that learning academic writing was important for their current study as almost (90%) N=36, of the students considered academic writing highly important for their current undergraduate study. The findings also showed that around (52%) N=21 of the students reported that learning academic writing was highly important for their future career, whereas only few of the students indicated that learning academic writing would be important for their academic works to be published. The data also revealed that (45%) N=18 of the students believed that learning academic writing would be of a little importance for publishing their works. In response to the students' interest in academic writing learning, the findings displayed that almost (60%) N=24 of the students indicated that they were very interested in learning academic writing.

On the whole, while results displayed that students had strong needs for learning academic writing for their current study and future career, they did not regard learning academic writing as important for publishing their research works. Therefore, it can be assumed from the data obtained that undergraduate students did not seem to have strong needs for publishing their academic works the reason for this which could be attributed to the fact that most research works in Libya are published in Arabic, except for students who will pursue a higher degree such as an MA program or a Ph.D course.

Part 2. Students perceptions about the degree of including some text types in their academic writing course

In response to the second part of the questionnaire which was to investigate the students opinions about the need to include text types in their academic writing course as shown in the table. The results revealed that among the ten text types needed to be included in students' academic writing which were reported as extremely helpful were research papers and essays as the majority (92%) N= 37 of the students regarded research papers as extremely helpful for their academic writing to

be included, and that (85%) N=34 of the students regarded essays as extremely helpful, followed by (82.5%) n=33 of students who regarded research proposals as extremely helpful to be included for their academic writing program.

Therefore, it can be interpreted here that the reason why undergraduates students regarded research papers as the most needed text types helpful for their undergraduate study is that students were required to write academic research papers as part of assessment system in order to pass their course in the faculty of education. Additionally, students believed that learning how to write a research paper would help them after graduation to publish their academic works.

As for formal reports, the majority of the students believed that these text types are very much needed as they are extremely helpful for their academic writing and as a result they should be included. Based on the data obtained, the results revealed that around (77.5%) N=31 of the students regarded research abstracts as extremely helpful and that (72%) N=29 of the students regarded formal reports as extremely helpful for their academic writing. This suggests that students were aware of the needs of these text types especially for their future career where they would need to write formal reports and emails. The data also indicated that more than two thirds(80%) N=32 of the students believed that summaries were extremely helpful text types needed for their academic writing to be included, and that (80%) N=32 of the students thought that research studies were extremely helpful text types to be included in their academic writing course.

On the whole, from the data obtained it can be said the majority of the students were aware of the importance of the these ten txt types to be included in order to help them learn academic writing. However, only a minority (30%) N=12 of the students regarded critiques as helpful text types to be included which seemed to suggest that students in this study tended to see critiques as less important than other text types or it may be that students did not know what critiques were about.

Part 3 students perceptions about the level of difficulty/ease of academic writing skills

Research Question 2 regarding students' opinions of Difficulty& ease of academic writing skills . Thus, part 3 of the questionnaire was created and it consists of 20 important items to assess students perceptions about the difficulty/ease of these academic writing skills . Although the data obtained revealed some disparities among students regarding the level of difficulty and ease of academic writing skills, the findings displayed that students experienced greater difficulties than ease with these academic writing skills. In case of ease, the results indicated that around (37.5%) N=15 of the students believed that academic writing skills such as writing introductions & conclusions were easy

for them, whereas almost (32.5%) N=13 of the students reported to have found writing introductions & conclusions slightly difficult. As for writing literature review, the data revealed that almost (42.5%) N=17 of the students indicated that these academic writing skills were easy for them. The results also demonstrated that nearly more than half (52.5%) N=21 of the students found academic writing skills such as referring to previous studies slightly difficult, whereas almost (30%) N=12 of the students regarded referring to previous studies as easy. Results also showed that the majority of students (77.5%) N=31 experienced greater difficulty with reviewing and critiquing previous studies. Therefore, this difficulty could be attributed to the lack of providing students with sufficient academic writing input in order to help them better conduct reviews and critiques of previous studies.

In case of formulating research methods, the data revealed that almost (57.5%) N=23 of the students experienced difficulties with this text type of academic writing skills ,and that around (49.5%) N=19 of the students regarded evidence back-up & plagiarism avoidance skills as extremely difficult. The findings also indicated that almost (42.5%) N=17 of the students found summarizing and presenting the findings skills extremely difficult, and that almost (45%) N=18 of the students reported to experience greater difficulties with discussing the research findings skills. As for reflective writing skills such as analysing & examining students' work, the findings demonstrated that around (35%) N=14 of the students found this text type slightly difficult, and that quoting sources & bibliography text types seemed to pose slight difficulties to almost(43.5%) N=17 of the students. The data obtained also indicated that more than half (55%) N=22 of the students experienced real difficulties in developing an argument and that around(52.5%) N=21 of the students believed that proof reading skills were difficult for them. The data also revealed that around (52.5%) N=21 of the students faced greater difficulties in distinguishing between different language features of the academic genre, i.e., descriptive, analytical, persuasive and critical.

In short, It can be inferred from the data that undergraduate students did not seem to be taught how to do proof reading skills & nor how to distinguish between different language features of the academic genre, i.e., descriptive, analytical, persuasive and critical.

In spite of the difficulties with some text types, undergraduate students also seemed to have found some of these text types easy. The data revealed that almost (37.5%) N=15 of the students found planning, structuring and editing their work easy, and that (35%) N=14 of the students indicated writing the appropriate lexical sentences as easy. The data also showed that some text types posed very little difficulties for students, for example , around (40%) N=16 of the students found summarizing & paraphrasing a text/idea a little difficult, and that (32.5%) N=13 of the student

indicated that writing coherent paragraphs appropriately was little difficult for them. Furthermore, the results showed that almost (35%) N=14 of the students experienced little difficulty with linking sentences logically, and that around (40%) N=16 of the students found writing appropriate academic language styles a little difficult for them. In addition, the findings indicated that almost (40%) N=16 of the students found using correct grammar, punctuation and spelling easy from which it can be inferred that teachers and instructors gave more emphasis to the teaching of grammar and the mechanics of writing rather than other text types of academic writing skills.

On the whole, it could be concluded that the students' perceptions varied conspicuously in terms of the different text types of academic writing skills as indicated by the students responses.

As a consequence, the results here seem to suggest that students at the faculty of education experienced language problems due to some difficult text types they found. These lacks, therefore, could be resulted from excluding these text types from the academic writing materials or curricula as Evans and Green (2007) stated that students' lack of confidence in the language-related aspects of academic writing, especially lexical and grammatical aspects resulted in real language problems for them.

In brief , BA undergraduate students did not seem to have enough exposure to different academic genres nor they had sufficient knowledge of the structure and content of academic genres before they joined university. Therefore, it could be interpreted that most under graduate students had little understanding of the academic writing skills, more specifically, the academic research genres.

Part 4. Students' perceptions about the frequency of including academic writing skills in their previous academic writing course.

Research Question 3: Previous Academic Writing Courses: What students have learned. Part 4 of the questionnaire aimed to assess students' perceptions on how frequently academic writing skills were included in their previous academic writing course. The data revealed that the least frequently included writing skills in the students' previous academic writing course were the greatest difficulties students experienced.

For instance, the findings displayed that almost half of the students (42.5%) N=17 indicated that academic writing skills such as writing introductions & conclusions were very frequently taught in their academic writing course. Therefore, this finding almost corresponds to finding in part 3 related to the students who indicated that academic writing skills such as writing introductions & conclusions were easy for them.

The data obtained also revealed that around half of the students (47.5%) N=19 indicated that writing literature review skills were sometimes included in their academic writing course, and that around of the students (40%) N=16 reported that academic writing skills such as referring to previous studies were rarely included in their writing course. The findings also showed that almost (42.5%) N=17 of the students indicated that writing skills such as Reviewing and critiquing previous studies were never taught and included in their academic writing course, and that almost (37.5%) N=15 of the students indicated that formulating research methods were never included in their previous academic writing course.

Moreover, the findings showed that around (32.5%) N=13 of the students reported that evidence back-up & plagiarism avoidance skills were never included. Similar results indicated that almost (35%) N=14 of the students reported that academic writing skills such as summarizing and presenting the findings were never included, and that around (35%) N=14 of the students indicated that reflective writing skills were never included in their academic writing course. In addition, the data revealed that almost (32.5%) N=13 of the students indicated that quoting sources & bibliography writing skills were sometimes included in their academic writing course.

Furthermore, there were some other academic writing skills that were never included in the students' previous academic writing course as. For instance, the results revealed that around (42.5%) N=17 of the students reported that developing an argument skills and distinguishing between different language features of the academic genre, i.e., descriptive, analytical, persuasive and critical were never included in their academic writing course, and that around (40%) N=16 of the students indicated that proof-reading skills were never included. This suggests that there is a strong relationship between what was difficult and what was not (included) taught included in the students' academic writing course , that is to say, the less these skills were taught, the more difficult the students felt they were.

On the contrary, the findings revealed that there were some other academic writing skills that were frequently included in the students previous academic writing course. It was noted that almost (37.5%) N=15 of the students reported that some academic writing skills such as Planning structuring and editing their work and summarizing & paraphrasing a text/idea as well as writing coherent paragraphs appropriately were very frequently taught , and that around (35%) N=14, of the students indicated that writing skills such as writing the appropriate lexical sentences and linking sentences logically were very frequently included in their previous academic writing course.

However, surprisingly, the findings showed that almost (42.5%) N=17 of the students indicated that academic writing skills such as using correct grammar, punctuation and spelling were very frequently taught and included in their previous academic writing course. This finding is, therefore, consistent to the finding related to the ease students experienced with using correct grammar, punctuation and spelling in their academic writing course.

On the whole, it can be assumed that these findings are supported by the findings displayed in part 3 of the questionnaire .In other words, the level of difficulty in some academic writing skills corresponds to the frequency of the academic writing skills included in the students' previous academic writing course. Therefore, from the data obtained it could be implied that difficulties students experienced were due to the lack of including the academic writing skill necessary to develop their academic writing proficiency, and that the easiest academic writing skills students indicated were due to the frequent input of including these skills in their academic writing course.

Part 5. Students perceptions about the effectiveness of teaching materials used in their academic writing course.

In the light of the teaching materials used in students' academic writing course, there were several results about the effectiveness of teaching materials used in their academic writing course as shown in part 5 of the questionnaire . The data obtained, therefore, revealed various views among students related to the effectiveness of the teaching materials used as effective in students' academic writing. The findings displayed that almost (40%) 16= N of the students regarded the core writing textbook used in their academic writing course as quite effective for them. From this finding, it can be interpreted that students were not satisfied with the core writing textbook used as it was not effective enough for them now it was useful. The results also showed that around half (50%) N= 20 of the students indicated that the supplementary hand-outs used in their writing course were ineffective for them. However, despite this ineffectiveness, the data revealed that almost (42%) N= 17 of the students believed that the additional materials such as phrase banks and phrasebooks used in their academic writing course were very effective for them. Similar results demonstrated that around (35%) N= 14 of the students indicted their satisfaction with the previous models of research papers which were used in their academic writing course as effective, and that around (37.5%) N=15 of the students indicated that academic word lists such as learning academic vocabulary that were used in their academic writing course were quite effective for them.

On the whole, it can be interpreted from the data obtained that although students seemed to prefer supplementary authentic materials such as past research papers as models and supplementary

hand-outs, they still needed a writing text book that could meet their academic writing needs in order to develop their academic writing proficiency.

Part 6: students perceptions about the teaching activities & tasks provided in their academic writing course.

With regards to the teaching activities & tasks used in the students' academic writing course, there were several findings.

Based on the findings of this study, it was clear that most teaching tasks & activities in the students' previous academic writing courses were almost non-existent. For example, around (35%) N=14 of the students indicated that teaching activities involving them working with peers for generating ideas were never provided in their previous academic writing course, and that almost (32.5%) N=13 of the students indicated that teaching activities involving them working individually for writing assignments were always provided. Therefore, it can be inferred from the data obtained that the teaching style used was teacher-centered and that the teachers were strict and used to control the class rather than encouraging learners to participate in classroom discussions to generate their ideas. The findings also displayed that around (45%) N=18 of the students indicated that they were never given tasks on how to give oral presentations in their previous academic writing course. Moreover, the data obtained revealed that almost (27.5%) N=11 of the students indicated that academic writing tasks involving students doing brainstorming activities before writing were sometimes provided in their previous academic writing course, and that (35%) N=14 of the students reported that classroom activities such as doing Academic grammar exercises were sometimes provided in their previous academic writing course. The results also showed that around (40%) N=16 of the students indicated that writing related activities such as doing academic vocabulary exercises were mostly provided in their previous academic writing course, and that (35%) N=14 of the students indicated that doing academic writing Exercises were mostly provided in their previous academic writing course. Furthermore, the findings demonstrated that almost (37.5%) N=15 of the students indicated that doing academic reading exercises were always included in their previous academic writing course whereas around (42.5%) N=17 of the students indicated that reading and analysing authentic research papers were never provided in their previous academic writing course. The findings also displayed that almost half (50%) N=20 of the students indicated that they were never given activities for peer-corrections & self-assessment in their previous academic writing course, and that around(32.5%) N=13 of the students reported that academic writing tasks such as doing essay drafting activities were sometimes provided in their previous academic writing course. More

surprisingly, the data obtained showed that almost (52.5%) N=21 of the students believed that the academic writing tasks provided in their previous academic writing course were never enjoyable.

On the whole, it can be interpreted that students were neither provided with the most engaging academic writing activities where the focus should learner-centred nor they were involved in any academic writing tasks . As a result, it could be suggested that students' needs could possibly be met with an EAP task-based approach and with more classroom discussion. As this type of approach strongly concentrates on the guided analysis of authentic genres text types in the class room where students could develop their strategy awareness for independent learning and improve their understanding of the different genres in academic writing in the future.

5. Conclusion

Based on goal of this study, an attempt was made to obtain some data from the survey questionnaire in order to investigate the EFL students' needs in learning academic writing and to identify the target needs and difficulties students have in academic writing skills in general. Like most previous studies carried out in EFL contexts have done, this study specifically investigated students' perceptions about their current and previous needs for academic writing and their views on the teaching materials & tasks provided in their academic writing courses. The results indicated that the academic writing skills students found difficult were those which were less frequently taught in their previous academic writing course. The results also showed that reviewing and critiquing previous studies and developing an argument as well as distinguishing between different language features of the academic genre were regarded by students as the most difficult academic writing skills which resulted in real language-related problems for them. With reference to the degree of the effectiveness of the teaching materials employed, the study concluded that although students seemed to prefer supplementary authentic teaching materials such as research papers as models and supplementary hand-outs, they still needed a writing text book that should meet their academic writing needs in order to develop their academic writing proficiency. Therefore, it must be suggested that students needed more reading of authentic research papers with group discussions in class.

As for the teaching activities & tasks used, the results found that students were neither provided with the most engaging academic writing activities where the focus should be learner-centred nor they were involved in any academic writing tasks .

Taking into account these results, an EAP genre-based syllabus should be provided to find a solution for the EFL students' related language problems for students in the EFL contexts with similar

problems in academic writing. Teachers and instructors should consider students' needs to when carrying out an academic writing instruction as an EAP- and ESP oriented model. Therefore, teachers and instructors need to employ modern and effective writing textbooks and design teaching materials that meet the students' needs.

However , this study had several limitations. First, it was a small scale study involved a small size of students . Second, the generalization of the results cannot be made with the other university students in Libya who have similar needs unless it is further investigated. Therefore, faculties of education of Libyan universities should conduct a larger-scale needs analysis investigations in order to gain more insights about students perceptions across disciplines before proposing an EAP writing course.

In a nutshell, it could be suggested that EFL students should be offered an academic writing course with the necessary academic research skills and considering the most effective teaching materials and teaching tasks & activities for a successful academic writing course in order to develop EFL students' academic writing proficiency.

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