

EFL Academic Writing Challenges under Divided Responsibility: An Academic Literacies Analysis Informed by Lea and Street

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Abstract- Academic writing challenges in EFL higher education are often framed as deficiencies in students' language and writing skills, with less attention to the pedagogical and institutional conditions through which academic writing is taught. This study investigated challenges perceived by current students, course-experienced students, and lecturers in a Writing for Academic Purposes course at an Indonesian university. A quantitatively driven explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was employed. Questionnaire data from 153 participants were summarized using item-level mean scores, while semi-structured interviews with 12 participants were analyzed through Reflexive Thematic Analysis. Lea and Street's Academic Literacies Model served as a sensitizing theoretical lens. The quantitative findings indicated recurring concerns related to AI literacy instruction, feedback, interpersonal interaction, teaching variation, instructional constraints, and difficulties across ideation, planning, drafting, and revision. The qualitative analysis developed four themes: standards without dialogue, scaffolding without agency, AI as unofficial writing infrastructure, and writing development under divided responsibility. In this study, divided responsibility refers to the distribution of responsibility for writing development across student engagement, pedagogical practices, and institutional conditions rather than its attribution to learners alone. Taken together, the findings suggest tensions among technical skills instruction, academic socialization, student agency, institutional expectations, and emerging AI-mediated writing practices. The study highlights the need for more dialogic feedback, transparent assessment, agency-oriented scaffolding, and explicit critical AI literacy in EFL academic writing instruction.

Keywords: *Academic Literacies, EFL Academic Writing, Generative AI Literacy, Reflexive Thematic Analysis, Writing Pedagogy*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Academic writing is often framed as a problem of language, although it is equally a problem of access: access to disciplinary expectations, evaluative standards, and the conventions through which knowledge becomes recognizable as academic. In EFL higher education, students' difficulties are therefore not reducible to grammar, vocabulary, or textual organization. They are also shaped by prior educational experience, confidence, classroom relations, pedagogical practices, assessment, and institutional support [1], [2]. Writing is not simply the production of correct sentences; it is a situated practice through which students learn how claims are warranted, how evidence is organized, and how authority is negotiated within academic communities [3], [4].

These expectations are mediated through classroom practices. Model texts, outlines, assessment criteria, and feedback can scaffold participation, but they can also reduce writing

to procedural compliance when conventions are presented as fixed forms rather than rhetorical and disciplinary choices. Academic-literacies research has shown that learning to write involves negotiating disciplinary knowledge, institutional norms, and writer identity, rather than merely acquiring transferable textual skills [5], [6]. Feedback is central to this process because it can make expectations visible and support revision, yet its effectiveness depends on students' ability to interpret and use it, as well as on the quality of teacher-student interaction [7], [8]. These conditions are difficult to sustain in classrooms shaped by large enrolments, uneven proficiency, limited instructional time, and heavy feedback workloads [9], [10].

Generative artificial intelligence has intensified these existing tensions. AI tools can support brainstorming, outlining, drafting, language correction, and revision, particularly where individualized support is limited [11], [12]. However, the availability of assistance does not guarantee meaningful engagement with writing. When students delegate decisions about ideas, structure, or language to AI, support can shift into substitution. Critical AI literacy therefore requires the capacity to evaluate outputs, recognize limitations, retain authorial agency, and make ethically defensible choices throughout the writing process [13]. The ability of generative systems to reproduce recognizable academic genres also complicates assumptions about authorship, assessment, and legitimate assistance [14]. Without explicit institutional guidance, acceptable AI use is likely to be negotiated inconsistently by students and lecturers [15].

Although these issues have been widely discussed, they are commonly studied in separate strands. Classroom-based L2 writing research often distinguishes among learner development, teaching practice, and assessment [1], while feedback research concentrates on how responses are provided, interpreted, and used [8]. Academic-literacies scholarship foregrounds meaning making, identity, agency, and institutional authority [3], [4], [5]. For RQ2, the three orientations are distinguished analytically. The study-skills model treats writing primarily as a set of transferable linguistic and textual skills; the academic-socialization model emphasizes induction into disciplinary genres, conventions, and ways of knowing; and the academic-literacies model extends attention to meaning making, identity, authority, and institutional power. These orientations are overlapping rather than mutually exclusive and may coexist within the same course. AI-writing studies focus mainly on technological affordances, ethical risks, writer agency, and AI literacy [11], [13], [15]. Less attention has been given to how these concerns intersect at course level: how pedagogical practices, institutional constraints, AI use, and difficulties across the writing process are perceived by stakeholders occupying different positions within the same instructional context.

This study addresses that intersection in an Indonesian Writing for Academic Purposes course. It examines challenges related to assessment transparency, feedback, instructional practices, classroom relationships, critical-thinking development, AI literacy, and institutional conditions, alongside difficulties in ideation, planning, drafting, editing, and revision. Drawing on Lea and Street's [4] Academic Literacies Model, the study interprets these challenges not only as deficits in individual skill, but also as evidence of competing assumptions about how academic writing should be taught and learned. In this article, divided responsibility refers to the way responsibility for writing development is distributed—and sometimes differently attributed—across students, lecturers, pedagogical practices, and institutional conditions. The term does not imply equal responsibility among actors; rather, it captures how stakeholder accounts locate both the sources of writing difficulty and the obligation to address them in different parts of the instructional system. It addresses the following questions:

RQ1: What challenges do students, course-experienced students, and lecturers perceive in the teaching and learning of EFL academic writing?

RQ2: How do the identified challenges reflect tensions among study-skills, academic-socialization, and academic-literacies orientations in EFL academic writing instruction?

2. RESEARCH METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitatively driven explanatory sequential mixed-methods design (QUAN → qual). Here, quantitatively driven refers to the sequence and analytic priority assigned to the questionnaire phase, not to the use of inferential statistics. The questionnaire was administered first to the full sample to map the relative prominence of predefined challenges, and those descriptive patterns then shaped the interview focus. The qualitative phase was subsequently used to explain, contextualize, and complicate the questionnaire patterns. This sequencing is appropriate when qualitative data are used to elaborate on initially collected quantitative findings [16]. Integration occurred by using the questionnaire findings to inform the interview focus and by interpreting the descriptive quantitative and qualitative results together [17].

Formal institutional permission to conduct the study was granted by the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training at UIN Alauddin Makassar. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the use of questionnaire and interview data, and the audio-recording of interviews. Informed consent was obtained before data collection.

2.2 Research Context and Participants

The study was conducted in the English Education Department of UIN Alauddin Makassar, Indonesia, within the context of a Writing for Academic Purposes course. The study examined the course as experienced across more than one cohort rather than as a standardized intervention. Across participant accounts, instruction involved individual and group academic-writing tasks, lecturer-selected topics, model outlines or examples, peer review before lecturer correction, and criteria-based assessment. Feedback was described as occurring through peer review and lecturer response, although post-assignment explanation and opportunities for dialogue varied and were often described as limited. One lecturer reported that two class sections had at one point been combined into approximately 70 students. Because current and course-experienced participants had taken the course in different cohorts, the available dataset did not support a single verified figure for the total number of class sections or contact hours that applied uniformly to all participants; these details are therefore not reconstructed. Participants were selected purposively because of their direct experience with the course or its instruction.

The quantitative phase involved 153 participants, comprising 51 fourth-semester students, 100 higher-semester students with previous academic writing course experience, and two academic writing lecturers. The current students represented learners currently encountering academic writing instruction, whereas the course-experienced students provided retrospective perspectives based on their previous learning experiences. The lecturers contributed pedagogical perspectives concerning students' difficulties and institutional constraints.

2.3 Instruments and Data Collection

Quantitative data were collected through parallel structured questionnaires using a four-point frequency scale ranging from 1 = never to 4 = always. The student questionnaire contained ten items across two domains. Six course-level items addressed assessment transparency, feedback availability, teaching-method variation, AI literacy instruction,

lecturer–student interaction during feedback, and critical-thinking development; four process items addressed difficulties in ideation, planning, drafting, and editing or revision. The lecturer questionnaire included the same four writing-process items plus six instructional-constraint items concerning class size, available class time, heterogeneity in student proficiency, student motivation, implications of AI use, and access to facilities or resources. Because the items were framed as challenges or constraints, higher scores represented more frequent or more salient perceived difficulties.

The questionnaire was developed by the researchers specifically for this study rather than adopted as a standardized scale. Item construction was guided by the research questions and by recurring concerns in the academic writing literature. The instrument was intended to provide an item-level descriptive mapping of stakeholder perceptions rather than to measure a single latent construct. Accordingly, the findings were interpreted at the item level, and no claim of formal psychometric validation or scale-level reliability is made.

Qualitative data were generated through semi-structured interviews with a purposive subsample of 12 participants, comprising five current students, five higher-semester students who had completed the Writing for Academic Purposes course, and two lecturers. The interviews explored participants' experiences of assessment, feedback, teaching practices, AI use, classroom interaction, and difficulties across the academic writing process. Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes, was conducted in a combination of Indonesian and English, and was audio-recorded and transcribed with participants' consent. Indonesian excerpts selected for reporting were translated into English and checked against the original transcripts to preserve their intended meanings.

2.4 Data Analysis

Questionnaire responses were summarized using item-level mean scores. Because the frequency scale ranged from 1 = never to 4 = always and the items were framed as challenges or constraints, higher means indicate more frequently perceived difficulties; they do not represent better performance or stronger course quality. The analysis was descriptive because the study aimed to map the relative prominence of stakeholder perceptions rather than test causal relationships, group differences, or population-level effects. Current-student and course-experienced-student results were therefore compared descriptively without inferential testing. Because only two lecturers completed the questionnaire, lecturer means were used solely as compact summaries of their responses and were not interpreted as stable group estimates. The two lecturers' individual response patterns were retained during interpretation to avoid overgeneralizing from aggregated means.

The interview data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's Reflexive Thematic Analysis [18]. The analysis adopted a critical-constructionist orientation and was predominantly deductive and latent, while remaining open to meanings not anticipated by the theoretical framework. Lea and Street's [4] Academic Literacies Model functioned as a sensitizing lens for examining meaning making, student agency, institutional expectations, authority, and academic writing practices. It was not used as a fixed coding framework because the study-skills, academic-socialization, and academic-literacies models are overlapping rather than mutually exclusive.

The analysis followed six recursive phases: familiarization with the transcripts, generating codes, constructing initial themes, reviewing and developing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the analytic account [19]. Codes and themes were developed through the researcher's active and reflexive engagement with the data. Themes were conceptualized as patterns of shared meaning organized around a central idea rather than as summaries of interview topics. Reflexive notes were maintained to document analytical decisions and

examine how the researcher's assumptions shaped interpretation [18], [20]. Consistent with RTA, no structured codebook, inter-coder reliability coefficient, or consensus-coding procedure was used. RTA treats researcher subjectivity as an analytical resource and themes as interpretive constructions rather than findings that simply emerge from the data.

The quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated during interpretation. Questionnaire patterns were compared with the RTA themes and supporting interview extracts to identify areas of convergence, divergence, and expansion. The Academic Literacies Model was then used to develop an integrated interpretation of how reported writing difficulties were connected to teaching practices, institutional expectations, student agency, and emerging AI literacy demands.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings are organized according to the two research questions. Consistent with the explanatory sequential design, quantitative results first describe the distribution and relative prominence of the reported challenges, while the qualitative accounts explain, complicate, or extend those patterns. The questionnaire means are interpreted descriptively rather than inferentially and should not be read as evidence of statistically significant group differences. The qualitative themes represent situated analytical constructions and should not be read as claims about the statistical prevalence of particular experiences.

3.1 RQ1: Perceived Challenges in Teaching and Learning EFL Academic Writing

3.1.1. Course-level pedagogical challenges

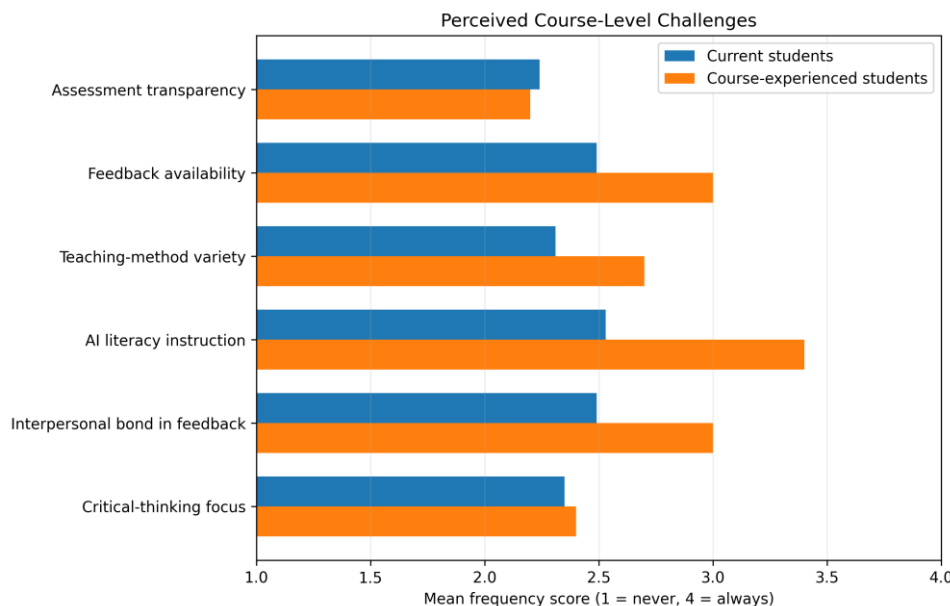


Figure 1. Perceived course-level challenges among current and course-experienced students

Figure 1 compares the six course-level challenges reported by current and course-experienced students. Limited attention to AI literacy had the highest item mean in both groups, with a descriptively higher mean among course-experienced students ($M = 3.40$) than current students ($M = 2.53$). Course-experienced students also reported more frequent concerns regarding insufficient feedback ($M = 3.00$), limited interpersonal engagement during feedback ($M = 3.00$), and insufficiently varied teaching methods ($M = 2.70$). The corresponding means among current students were 2.49, 2.49, and 2.31. The two groups were more closely aligned in their perceptions of assessment transparency and critical-thinking instruction,

which received relatively lower scores. These contrasts are descriptive and should not be read as statistically tested group differences.

Interview accounts provided context for these descriptive patterns. Assessment criteria were not reported as entirely absent. Instead, participants emphasized what happened after assessment. Student 1 explained that criteria were provided before an assignment, but there was “no review or explanation about why we got that grade.” Participants similarly described few opportunities to ask questions, limited post-writing feedback, predominantly explanatory teaching, and insufficient interpersonal exchange. AI occupied a particularly ambiguous position: students reportedly used it for academic tasks, but its acceptable and unacceptable uses had not been explicitly addressed in their accounts.

The descriptive contrast between current and course-experienced students is notable but should be interpreted cautiously. The latter did not simply assign higher scores across all items; their concerns were concentrated around feedback, interaction, teaching variation, and AI literacy. Retrospective experience may have made the limitations of the course more visible, although the present descriptive analysis cannot establish why the difference occurred. The interview accounts further suggest that providing criteria was not experienced as equivalent to making evaluative expectations intelligible. Feedback literacy requires learners to interpret standards, manage their responses, and use feedback in subsequent work; a grade without explanatory dialogue does not adequately support those processes [7], [8]. Dialogic feedback can make tacit academic expectations visible and gradually support writers’ independence, whereas one-directional evaluation leaves those expectations largely under the lecturer’s control [21].

3.1.2. Lecturer-perceived instructional constraints

The lecturer questionnaire addressed a related but distinct set of instructional constraints. Large class size received the highest mean score ($M = 3.50$), followed by limited class time, heterogeneous student proficiency, low student motivation, and the implications of AI use, each with a mean of 3.00. Limited access to facilities and resources received the lowest score ($M = 2.00$). Because the lecturer group consisted of only two respondents, these values represent stakeholder descriptions rather than reliable group estimates.

The qualitative accounts illustrated how participants experienced these constraints in combination. Lecturer 1 recalled that two classes had been combined into a group of approximately 70 students, making individualized feedback overwhelming from that lecturer’s perspective. Peer review was therefore used before lecturer correction to reduce the remaining feedback workload. The lecturer also characterized students’ intrinsic motivation as limited, particularly outside the small group who had specific ambitions such as overseas study or participation in competitions.

Large class size can constrain the sustained, individualized interaction that meaningful feedback requires. Olsen and Hunnes [9] found that formative feedback could operate in a class exceeding 300 students, yet they explicitly questioned whether personalized and dialogic feedback remained sustainable at that scale. Peer review can redistribute feedback work, but it cannot simply be introduced as a substitute for teacher response. Students require guidance in producing, interpreting, and using peer feedback, while lecturers remain responsible for establishing its standards and purpose [8]. At the same time, feedback should not be reduced to an institutional burden: sustained feedback-giving can also deepen teachers’ understanding of learners and inform subsequent instruction [10]. Taken together, the participant accounts suggest a structural tension between the individualized engagement valued in writing pedagogy and teaching conditions that may limit such engagement.

3.1.3. Difficulties across the writing process

Difficulties were reported across all four writing stages. Current and course-experienced students produced closely aligned scores, with differences of no more than 0.04 points at any stage. Both groups reported editing and revision as their most frequent difficulty ($M = 3.00$), followed by drafting, ideation, and planning. Lecturers similarly rated editing and revision at 3.00 but perceived planning and drafting as more pronounced difficulties, with both receiving a mean score of 3.50. Given the lecturer sample of two, lecturer means are presented only as descriptive summaries of those two responses.

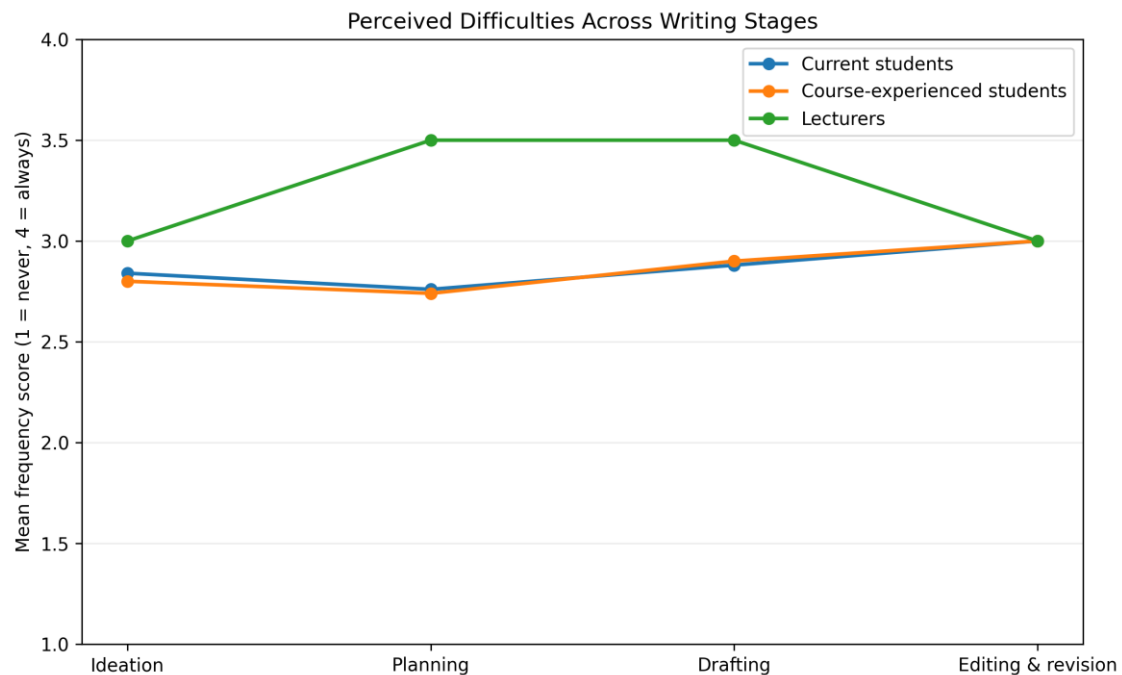


Figure 2. Perceived difficulties across academic writing stages

Interview accounts connected the writing stages without establishing causal relations among them. Participants associated ideation difficulty with lecturer-selected topics. Planning was described as supported through model outlines and examples, yet some students remained uncertain about how standards applied to their own texts. During drafting, one participant described extensive reliance on AI-generated material, while the lecturer reported stronger participation in group writing than in individual work. Editing and revision were consistently described as difficult, although the available interview material provided less detail about the specific sources of that difficulty.

The close descriptive alignment between current and course-experienced students suggests that these difficulties may not be confined to beginning writers. The interview accounts also caution against treating the four stages as isolated technical deficits: participants linked topic selection with ideation, prescribed structures with planning, AI use with drafting, and limited feedback with revision. Research on L2 writing planning likewise shows that preparation influences writers' attention and subsequent textual production [22]. From an academic-literacies perspective, writing development also requires changes in how students understand disciplinary questions, evidence, and argument – not merely increased fluency in following a sequence of steps [6]. Socially organized and collaborative writing instruction can strengthen motivation and self-regulation, but only when support progressively enables students to assume greater control over the process [23].

3.2 RQ2: Tensions among Academic Writing Orientations

The reflexive thematic analysis constructed four patterns of shared meaning. These themes did not classify individual comments rigidly into one of Lea and Street's three orientations. Instead, they captured points at which skills-based instruction, induction into academic conventions, and broader concerns with agency, authority, and meaning making overlapped or came into tension.

Table 1. Reflexive Thematic Analysis Themes Representing Tensions among Study-Skills, Academic-Socialization, and Academic-Literacies Orientations

Theme	Central organizing concept	Related orientation/tension
Standards without dialogue	Academic expectations were communicated through criteria, grades, and prescribed forms, but were not consistently made usable through explanation and post-assignment dialogue.	Incomplete academic socialization and restricted academic-literacies practice.
Scaffolding without agency	Topics, outlines, models, and group support helped students begin writing but could also displace independent rhetorical decision-making.	Tension between study skills, socialization, and learner agency.
AI as unofficial writing infrastructure	AI filled gaps in ideation, planning, drafting, and language support before acceptable practices had been institutionally articulated.	Emerging academic-literacies gap.
Writing development under divided responsibility	Students located difficulties in feedback and interaction, whereas lecturers emphasized motivation, proficiency differences, time, and class size.	Tension between individual-deficit and institutional accounts

3.2.1 Standards without dialogue

The first theme captured a distinction between making standards available and making them intelligible. Criteria and assignment structures were reportedly provided, but participants described limited explanation after assessment and few opportunities to discuss how their texts could be improved. One participant summarized this gap by stating that there was "no review or explanation about why we got that grade." Feedback was therefore experienced less as an ongoing exchange about academic meaning and more as a point at which performance was evaluated.

This pattern was interpreted as incomplete academic socialization. Students were exposed to the existence of academic conventions but were not consistently inducted into the reasoning through which those conventions acquire meaning. Within academic literacies, this is not merely a shortage of comments. It is restricted access to the tacit knowledge that determines what counts as an acceptable academic text. Lea and Street's model explicitly locates feedback, plagiarism requirements, individual assignments, and variation among lecturers within institutional literacy practices rather than treating them as neutral technical procedures.

Recent research strengthens this interpretation. Dialogic feedback can unpack hidden genre knowledge, disciplinary relationships, and expectations concerning original contribution [21]. Conversely, students may have limited opportunities to develop feedback agency when teacher judgment remains the primary source of meaning and students are positioned mainly as recipients of comments [24]. The evidence here therefore supports a more cautious interpretive implication: standards that are not accompanied by dialogue may remain only partially pedagogical. They can regulate performance, but may be insufficient on their own for developing academic judgment.

3.2.2 Scaffolding without agency

The second theme concerns the ambivalent function of pedagogical support. Lecturer-selected topics, prescribed outlines, model texts, brainstorming procedures, and group work enabled students to begin and complete writing tasks. Yet these same structures could reduce the number of meaningful decisions students were required to make. Student 2 stated that topics were rarely self-selected and that outlines often specified exactly what should be included. The lecturer, meanwhile, described students as more productive when they could depend on group interaction.

The findings do not show that scaffolding is inherently restrictive. Rather, participants' accounts suggest that scaffolding can become restrictive when it remains directive and does not progressively transfer control to learners. Academic writing requires more than producing an institutionally recognizable form; it requires selecting, organizing, and defending meanings. Aiken [5] similarly describes student writing as shaped by competing pressures to follow and resist academic conventions. Howitt et al. [6] show that participation in dialogic writing environments can transform students' understanding of disciplinary arguments and their identities as legitimate participants. The central issue is therefore not whether structure should be provided, but whether it ultimately expands or contracts students' capacity to make rhetorical decisions.

This theme also exposes the tension between study-skills and academic-literacies orientations. A skills-based model may regard a supplied outline as an efficient solution to organizational weakness. An academic-literacies interpretation asks who controls the meaning of the text, whose expectations are being reproduced, and whether students are learning to exercise authorship. Support that produces immediate compliance but no gradual independence is pedagogically incomplete.

3.2.3 AI as unofficial writing infrastructure

AI appeared throughout the accounts as both a perceived curriculum gap and an existing writing resource. Students reported no formal AI literacy instruction and no stable explanation of acceptable use. Nevertheless, AI was used for group assignments, planning, and drafting. One participant estimated that AI-generated material could constitute as much as 70% of some drafts, although this should be understood as a participant account rather than a measured proportion.

The reported lack of explicit institutional guidance is pedagogically consequential because participants described AI use as already embedded in the writing process. In this context, acceptable use appeared to be negotiated informally rather than governed by a stable course-level framework. Ou, Stöhr, and Malmström [25] similarly found divergent student understandings of ethical AI use in the absence of university instructions. Barrot [11] identifies clear possibilities for L2 writing support but also significant risks concerning accuracy, pedagogy, and academic integrity. Critical GAI literacy must therefore encompass effective interaction, evaluation of outputs, ethical judgment, and self-regulation rather than procedural knowledge alone [13].

The deeper tension concerns agency. AI can expand access to linguistic and procedural support, especially when human feedback is limited. Yet evidence from AI-supported learning shows that students may rely on assistance rather than learn from it [26]. AI-generated assignments can also reproduce recognizable academic registers closely enough to destabilize established assumptions about authorship and legitimate assessment [14]. In participants' accounts, AI sometimes functioned as more than a writing tool: it operated as unofficial pedagogical infrastructure, supplying support where instructional explanation, individual feedback, or confidence was perceived as insufficient. This interpretive role suggests a need for explicit, critical, and pedagogically grounded guidance.

3.2.4 Writing development under divided responsibility

The final theme captures how responsibility for writing difficulty was distributed differently across stakeholder accounts. Here, divided responsibility refers to differential attribution rather than equal apportionment of responsibility. Students emphasized limited feedback, unclear communication, insufficient teaching variation, restricted interaction, and uncertain expectations. Lecturer accounts emphasized motivation, proficiency differences, class size, time, reliance on peers, and the difficulty of managing AI use. Neither account cancels the other; rather, the accounts locate difficulty and responsibility in different parts of the instructional system: students foregrounded conditions of instruction, whereas the lecturers foregrounded learner characteristics and teaching constraints.

This divergence was treated as an important interpretive pattern rather than as analytical noise. A study-skills orientation makes it easy to locate failure within students—their motivation, language proficiency, organization, or independence. An academic-literacies orientation requires examination of how those apparent deficits are produced, intensified, or interpreted within institutional practices and relations of authority [3], [4]. Naturalistic feedback research likewise demonstrates that learners' responses are shaped simultaneously by proficiency, beliefs, motivation, emotions, teacher practices, and institutional context [8]. No single-factor explanation is adequate.

The lecturer accounts' concerns about motivation remain important, but motivation should not be interpreted independently of pedagogical experience. Yang [23] found that students' task interest, self-efficacy, goal orientation, and self-regulation changed positively through sustained social and collaborative writing activities. The present data therefore do not justify attributing weak engagement solely to intrinsic learner disposition. They suggest that motivation, agency, feedback, task design, and institutional capacity are mutually implicated. The theme of divided responsibility therefore captures a relational claim: students are expected to engage, while lecturers and institutions shape the conditions under which engagement becomes intelligible, supported, and consequential.

The two research questions converge on a broadly consistent interpretation. The course was not described as devoid of structure or support; rather, participants portrayed support as uneven, frequently implicit, constrained by teaching conditions, and increasingly supplemented or bypassed through AI. A study-skills orientation remained visible in the emphasis on outlines, stages, correction, and task completion. Academic-socialization practices were present through criteria, models, and lecturer guidance, but participants' accounts suggest that these practices were weakened by limited dialogue and insufficient explanation of evaluative judgment. Academic-literacies practices—particularly student agency, negotiated meaning, explicit institutional expectations, and critical AI engagement—appeared less fully developed in the accounts analyzed here.

The findings therefore suggest that the reported difficulties should not be reduced to a list of student weaknesses. Instead, they point to a broader pedagogical configuration in which students are expected to perform academic writing before all of its underlying rules, purposes, and emerging technological boundaries have necessarily been made equally accessible or explicit to them.

4. CONCLUSION

Taken together, the findings suggest that EFL academic writing challenges in this course were associated not only with learner-level difficulties but also with pedagogical practices, institutional conditions, and emerging technological demands. Students and course-experienced students reported difficulties related to feedback, instructional variation, AI literacy, and the stages of writing, while the two lecturers emphasized large classes, limited time, uneven proficiency, motivation, and the growing complexity of AI use. Interpreted

through the Academic Literacies Model, these participant accounts point to tensions among writing as technical skill, writing as induction into academic conventions, and writing as a situated practice involving agency, identity, authority, and meaning making. In this context, academic writing can therefore be understood not merely as a text students are required to produce, but as a social practice through which students encounter expectations about what counts as academic knowledge and participation.

The findings suggest several pedagogical implications for making writing instruction more dialogic, transparent, and explicit about both academic expectations and responsible AI use. Assessment criteria may be more useful when accompanied by feedback that students can interpret and act on; scaffolding can be designed to transfer rhetorical control gradually to students; and AI literacy can be integrated as a matter of judgment, authorship, and ethical decision-making rather than treated only as a question of prohibition. Because the quantitative analysis was descriptive, the lecturer subsample consisted of only two respondents, and the study was conducted in one institutional context, the findings should not be interpreted as causal or statistically generalizable. Future research should involve multiple institutions, larger and more diverse lecturer samples, and longitudinal designs capable of tracing changes in students' writing practices and identities over time. Further studies should also examine how AI-supported instruction is associated with revision quality, writer agency, feedback engagement, and disciplinary learning. A productive question for future writing pedagogy is not simply how students can produce better texts, but how institutions can create conditions that support increasingly independent, critical, and accountable academic writers.

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