

Overcoming Challenges Faced by Novice Writers in Academic Writing

Academic writing poses unique challenges for novice writers, particularly in establishing connections between sources, understanding the purpose of utilizing sources, and acquiring referencing skills. This article aims to shed light on these challenges and propose strategies to overcome them, ultimately helping students develop high-quality academic writing skills.

Deficiency of Establishing Connections between Sources

Many students struggle to compare and contrast differing perspectives by effectively integrating their current reading materials with previous texts. This lack of awareness and ability to establish connections hampers the development of cohesive and well-structured academic papers. To address this, students can employ strategies such as concept mapping and outlining to organize their thoughts and identify common themes across sources. By doing so, they can develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter and produce more nuanced arguments.

Limited Grasp of the Purpose of Utilizing Sources

While students generally recognize the importance of incorporating multiple sources to establish a comprehensive background and support their arguments, they often overlook additional purposes. These include evaluating cited sources, borrowing arguments and concepts, and applying them to their own writing. To overcome this challenge, it is crucial to educate students about the multifaceted roles of sources in academic writing. By emphasizing the importance of critical evaluation and synthesis of information, students can enhance the depth and credibility of their work.

Lack of Skills in Referencing

Students often find themselves unfamiliar with referencing conventions and resort to internet searches for information. This indicates a lack of instruction in referencing during their classes. Furthermore, non-

native English speakers face additional challenges in transferring referencing skills between their first language and English. To address this issue, educational institutions should provide explicit instruction on referencing skills, ensuring that students understand the importance of proper citation and referencing. This instruction should be available not only in English but also in students' first languages to facilitate their comprehension and application.

How do we solve the problems?

By addressing these challenges through effective strategies and comprehensive instruction, educators can empower students to overcome these obstacles. The research team, led by Dr. Cheong Choo Mui at the University of Hong Kong created and uploaded a series of [instructional videos](#) regarding academic writing for students to gain access to higher-order cognitive skills with more ease and less challenges, and thus produce better-quality essays. Students are also likely to benefit from using [the framework](#) developed as a metacognitive tool to assess and monitor their own learning progress. By employing this framework, students can evaluate their own performance and make necessary adjustments to enhance their academic writing skills.

The interventions and improvements in classroom instruction for both college and high school educators are also needed. High school teachers can consider incorporating explicit instruction for students in the skills they may struggle with when attempting academic writing tasks. While students may prioritize constructing an essay based on their existing knowledge, they may allocate less cognitive attention to effectively selecting and connecting sources from multiple articles. By providing explicit explanations, modeling, and guided practice, teachers can scaffold students' proficiency in using these specific connecting skills. This, in turn, will enable students to approach the topic from a more comprehensive

perspective. Furthermore, teachers can create opportunities for students to look for supporting materials in their argumentative writing by themselves instead of offering them direct sources for memorizing.

University teachers should recognize that Year One students, despite being native Chinese speakers, possess limited knowledge of academic writing. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to provide additional guidance to students on how to compose a well-structured academic essay, including aspects such as text structure, literature search and synthesis, referencing skills and citation style, and more. In light of this, university teachers can offer students detailed grading rubrics to provide clear guidelines for their writing tasks. Furthermore, teachers can dedicate the curricula time to share exemplary essay samples with students, thereby establishing a benchmark for acquiring specific writing skills. This practice sets a standard and helps students understand the expected level of proficiency. By equipping students with the necessary tools and knowledge, we can foster the development of confident and proficient academic writers who are capable of producing high-quality scholarly work.