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## TEACHING ENGLISH ACADEMIC WRITING FOR D3 NURSING STUDENTS OF UNUSA

Tiyas Saputri<sup>1</sup>, Tatik Muflihah and Atika Ayu Nurani<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>S1 English Education Department, FKIP, Nahdlatul Ulama University Surabaya  
Surabaya, Indonesia  
[tiyass@unusa.ac.id](mailto:tiyass@unusa.ac.id)

<sup>2</sup>S1 English Education Department, FKIP, Nahdlatul Ulama University Surabaya  
Surabaya, Indonesia  
[miraicha@unusa.ac.id](mailto:miraicha@unusa.ac.id)

<sup>3</sup>S1 English Education Department, FKIP, Nahdlatul Ulama University Surabaya  
Surabaya, Indonesia  
[atikaayunurani2@gmail.com](mailto:atikaayunurani2@gmail.com)

### *Abstract*

*In teaching academic English writing to D3 Nursing students, it is quite challenging for the English lecturer to teach it to them. The English lecturer needs to consider the students' background, the use of nursing terms and their knowledge of English with their strengths and weaknesses. Lecturer needs to adopt research based methods of L2 teaching since research based methods have been successful in helping L2 learners produce a satisfactory level writing of linguistic proficiency and mastery of academic writing. Furthermore, lecturers have to modify their classes according to their students' various needs. Techniques used vary and what works with one student is not necessarily appropriate with another. Research also reveals that by following certain strategies, academic writing can be acquired more efficiently, particularly when students have a high level of English proficiency. This research follows the qualitative research method since it is a classroom action research (CAR). An essay template was developed for the students to follow in order to teach them English academic writing. The data is composed of the students' pre- & post essays that were evaluated using the Common Core State Standards Writing Rubric. The participants are the D3 Nursing students of semester 2 (advanced level), at Unusa. The results show that following the designed "essay template" has improved the students' academic writing and therefore, the researchers recommend using the template.*

**Keywords:** *English; academic writing; teaching strategy; essay template*

### **Introduction**

Language is the medium of communication through which students learn various concepts and skills, form their identities and interact socially with others. Language is the corner stone of the teaching and learning process (Bloom, et al., 2004). Many students in Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Surabaya (Unusa) speak languages in addition to English. They speak with their mother tongue such as Javanese, Madurese or Indonesian language as the majority D3 Nursing students of Unusa is Javanese and Madurese. In the English class of D3 Nursing of Unusa, students are requested to use academic English language in teaching and learning process. The more academic content becomes abstract and complex, the more the language structures become sophisticated and challenging (Bailey, Burkett, & Freeman, 2010).

Academic language, more specifically academic English, can be defined as the language through which university subjects are taught and assessed. It is the language used in university settings aiming at helping students acquire and use knowledge (DiCerbo et al., 2014). Students need lecturer's support in order to engage in tasks across university subjects while focusing on the discourse, lexical, and grammatical components of the academic English language (Schleppegrell, 2009; Snow & Uccelli, 2009). Many D3 Nursing students of semester 2 have a negative attitude towards writing in general and writing in the target English language in particular. They do not find the need to follow the writing process and consider the pre-writing techniques which they think a waste of time. One of the reasons was the students in the classroom vary in their level of English proficiency. In this case, lecturers find themselves trying to persuade students repeatedly of the importance of developing their academic writing in the English language. Therefore, lecturers need to help students get familiar with the various nursing

terms and academic writing styles such as tentative, formal, informal and objective. Such advanced writing styles require that students have a good knowledge of grammar, syntax, spelling, vocabulary, and others.

In Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Surabaya there are three levels of English nursing they are English 1 (semester 1) and English 2 (semester 2). The D3 Nursing students of semester 2 who took part in this research belong to the advanced level group; that is, they have advanced linguistic abilities as well as a high proficiency in English academic writing. After some resilience to use a commonly essay template (see Appendix I) as a pre-writing technique, they started following the writing process (Munoz-Luna, 2015) and showed improvement in their written products.

The purpose of this research is to investigate how high is the advancement of semester 2 students of English 2 for Nursing in their academic writing in the English language. Their improvement was promoted by the use of the essay template, which helped them organize their writing and follow successfully the writing process. This research aims at answering the following question: Does the use of a template designed for academic writing improve semester 2 D3 nursing students' performance in writing?

In the 21st century, writing is still perceived as a demanding task involving a wide range of skills and subskills (Mazandarani, 2010). Writing is one of the complex activities involving grammar and semantic instruction. Educators have always considered writing difficult to measure, assess, analyze and score (MunozLuna, 2015). Writers normally cannot be consciously aware of all the writing strategies involved when writing in English L2 classes. Therefore, lecturers should carefully plan writing strategies that students can consciously work on their texts from a multiple perspective, which include: grammatical level, lexical level, discursive level, metadiscursive level, genre specifications, and content compilation (Lillis & Curry, 2006). When students are not familiar with the various writing stages and strategies, it is the lecturers' duty to provide them with enough opportunities to practice their writing skill using academic English.

Using writing strategies makes students more autonomous and self-regulated while writing in English, their second language. Writing strategies are essential for writers to refine their ideas in their academically written productions. The writing strategies in L2 academic writing (Nacera, 2010; Mitchell & Myles, 2004) are:

1. Metacognitive strategies (planning, monitoring, reviewing, evaluating, reporting findings, recognizing essay structures),
2. Cognitive strategies (repetition, organization, summarizing, imagery using, deducing, inference, note writing, paraphrasing),
3. Comprehension strategies (re-reading), and
4. Socio-affective strategies (cooperative planning).

Since writing is a cyclical process, writers need to continually revise their scripts and adjust their strategies as needed (Roca de Larios, Manchón, Murphy, & Marín, 2008). Consequently, students who normally proof-read and revise their writings tend to perform better (Munoz-Luna, 2015). Academic writing should be focused on the following (as listed in del Olmo, 2015):

1. Grammar and punctuation
2. Concise and fluid writing
3. Formal vocabulary
4. Audience and purpose
5. Nominalizations
6. Unambiguous writing
7. Writing conventions: abbreviations, acronyms and compound labels
8. Hedging (the author's awareness of his/her reader besides the presence of the author in the text)

Proficient academic writers usually make passive forms use of the verb, impersonal pronouns and phrases, qualifying words and phrases, complex sentence structures, and specialized vocabulary. Hedging is one of the main characteristics of academic writing. Being able to use hedges appropriately allows the writer to function in an English speaking academic world. Hedges can also help writers consider their readers as participants in the text (Hyland, 2005). The importance of hedging devices lie in their ability to help authors to introduce their claims with more caution in order to be more widely accepted by their colleagues and, ultimately enhancing positive interaction and intellectual debate.

In Munoz-Luna research, she analyzed the essays of 200 Spanish undergraduate students written using academic English. Findings showed that participants who used various writing strategies prior as well as during writing were able to produce complex sentences and more coherent texts. These advanced writers were proficient in the use of complex transitions for coherence and textual cohesions. In addition, they employed commonly used prewriting strategies that help them plan their piece of writing in addition to outlining, drafting, and proofreading.

Helping the students to build the students' confidence in academic writing using English as a medium (AWE) is very important. Lecturers must work at building their students' confidence, making them realize that academic writing can be successfully acquired when following systematic prewriting strategies (Panourgia &

Zafiri, 2012). The AWE acquisition is vital for students' academic success (Baily et al. 2010). AWE lecturers need to collaborate with educators from another subject, especially in this case nursing study, in their endeavor to improve their learners' skills (DiCerbo et al., 2014). Many D3 nursing students in Unusa do not know how to write academically and need further training in building their writing skills. A technique for doing so is teaching students to follow the process approach which can turn them into flexible writer (Silva, 1990 as cited by Caldwell, 2011). Through writing process, lecturers can develop invention strategies (Coffin et al., 2003) to assist their students in becoming proficient writers. From this perspective, the writing template has been developed for the semester 2 D3 nursing students of Unusa.

## Research Methods

The aim of this research is investigating the influence of a designed template in improving students' proficiency in writing. Students were required to use and follow the template while planning and drafting their essays.

This research used a classroom action research that aims at improving and refining the researcher's teaching methods. It follows the qualitative method of analyzing the data. In evaluating the students' essays, it used the Common Core State Standards Writing Rubric.

The participants of this study were the students of D3 Nursing semester 2 of Unusa. They attend English 2 for nursing. The students were 60, which is a high-leveled English class whose students are very proficient in the English language.

**Table 1.** Participants

Grade	≤60	61-70	71-80	81-90	91-100
Total Student	9 (15%)	15 (25%)	18 (30%)	12 (20%)	6 (10%)

The instruments used in this research were a pre- and post-tests in writing. A prompt related to nursing taken in the English class was given in which the students had to respond to in a 1-2 paragraph essay. A template was developed for the students (Refer to Appendix) to follow in order to teach them in academic writing. The essays were evaluated following the Common Core State Standards Writing Rubric devised by the English Professional Learning Council (EPLC) and Turnitin (2012).

The class started on September 4th, 2017. The participants had come from semester 2 D3 Nursing of the previous year. The first diagnostic writing test was administered in the beginning of October 2017. During October and November, two writing tests were given, which topic of writing was about Nursing daily activities in hospital or clinic. The basic components of writing were given in class. Lessons on how to write in English, a good introduction and conclusion, and good support and development were covered. These writing tests were considered as pre-tests. In term 2, which started mid-December, a writing template was developed and introduced to the students. They were required to follow it in their writing. They sat for three writing tests in term 2: one-December 6, 2017, two-December 13, 2016 and the last, three- December 20.

## Research Results and Discussion

After undergoing each writing test, the students' grades were recorded for data collection. Later, tables were constructed on Excel and means of the pre- and post-tests were calculated.

**Table 2.** Pre/Post Tests Means

Type of test	Pre-test	Post-test
Grade (Average Means)	73	78

The table above shows that the grade (average means) reveals a 5 point increase (from 73-78). The template had given the learners a framework to refine and organize their ideas to produce a well-written response (Nacera, 2010). By following the template, which served as a pre- and during writing strategies, the students were able to develop more complex and coherent essays (Munoz-Luna, 2015). Moreover, the template had turned the participants into autonomous writers who are confident of their writing. When realizing that by following systematic prewriting strategies would lead them to improved essay products (Panouragia & Zaifiri, 2012) learners endorsed the template as a writing strategy. The template's 'success' in improving the learners' academic writing was also reflected in the learners' performance in nursing. The researcher who is also the lecturer commented that the learners' responses have become more focused, well organized and their explanations supported by evidence.

The samples writing below, which were written by the same student, reveals the extent of improvement in the student's writing.

#### Sample 1

Prompt: Please describe the nurse daily activity in the hospital/clinic

On Tuesday 17 October 2017 I'm Nurensia at Islamic hospital Surabaya (note 1). On this day I was assigned to treat all patient named 9 year old child of this Berliana was exposed to asthma. I as a nurse will do the oxygen installation to Berliana (note 2).

After his asthma pains subsided I was assigned again in my womb room to clean and record the patient and perform blood pressure checks and deliver patient complaints (note 3). Then invite the patient to sit back into place and wait for his name to be called.

In Sample 1: In the introduction of the first paragraph, there is no transition between the first sentence and the second to connect the ideas together and it had no punctuation (note 1). Although in the first sentence, the student tried to give identity of the writer as a nurse in the hospital and linked it to the prompt, the grammar, punctuation and diction shown in it was terrible. In note 2, still in the first paragraph, it is found inaccuracy in the standard English conventions of grammar, punctuation and diction which is considered as a basic mistake in the advanced level. Finally, in note 3, in the second paragraph, it lacked focus. In level 5, learners are required to develop a focused thesis statement. It is concluded that sample 1 lacks all the requirements of a good introduction as presented in the template.

#### Sample 2

Prompt: Please describe the nurse daily activity in the hospital/clinic

My name is Evilia. I am a nurse at the hospital. I usually start working at 6 a.m. and then clean the room, read patient's medical records. Then, I take action to the patient and starting from observation, which cover blood pressure, temperature, respiration rate, and pulse.

Suppose there are patients who needs help with bathing, I prepare toiletries and new dressing gear (note 1). Next at 9 a.m., I give oral medication or injection to the patient. I there is a new patient hospitalization (note 2). I did the infusion. Before going home I usually fill the book about nursing care, which I have given to the patient today, and plan action which I will do next.

In Sample 2: The first two sentences in the first paragraph serve as the introduction of the paragraph which gives the personal identity of the writer as a nurse in the hospital. In the third sentence, the student wanted to start to link the text with the prompt. Finally, the first paragraph serves as a well-structured and focused thesis.

In the second paragraph, she tried to link the sentence with the prompt but she started with the wrong word 'suppose' and wrong structure (note 1). In note 2, it is found wrong structure and lacks of focus. In short, sample 2 has started to follow the template given.

#### Conclusions and recommendations

It concludes that the students' writing skills improved in a short period of time. The researchers recommend implementing the designed template since it turned the students into autonomous students and gave them confidence in writing. Moreover, it improved their performance in other subject matter that required English academic writing, especially nursing. The template showed improvement in very short time, therefore can be used by students who do not have time to master the techniques and requirements of academic writing.

**Table 3.** Essay Template

<b>Part</b>	<b>Structure</b>	<b>Information</b>
Introduction	General Information on topic Linking topic to prompt Thesis statement (focused into topic + at least 2 sub proofs)	
Body Paragraph 1	Topic Sentence Supporting details of 1 Example 1 Supporting details of 2 Example 2 Conclusion	
Body Paragraph 2	Topic Sentence Supporting details 1 Example 1 Supporting details 2 Example 2 Conclusion	
Conclusion	Re-introduces thesis Summarizes argument Expresses attitude	

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