

Language and Knowledge Content Gaps in Students' Academic Writing: A Case Study in University of Science and Technology- The University of Da Nang

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to identify and bridge the major language and knowledge gaps existing in their IELTS writing task 2. A collection of 202 essays made by engineering freshmen at the University of Technology- The University of Da Nang (DUT-UDN) is interpreted and organized into two strata: (i) lexicogrammar and (ii) knowledge content stratum. The descriptive and qualitative analysis of the collected data reveals that there is a tremendous number of grammatical errors, such as tenses, conjunctions, prepositions, and others, as well as wrong word use or lexical errors on account of word-by-word translation. Particularly, this study sheds light on the challenges of a persistent absence of experience and real-world knowledge in supporting techniques to offer solid persuasion to readers within a cross-cultural perspective. It is concluded that besides teaching grammatical and lexical ranges, introducing, practicing, and reinforcing argumentation, critical reasoning, typical exemplifying, quoting, and citing statistical evidence techniques are also essential in academic essays.

Introduction

The English language testing is faced with surging demands of accountability in all language examinations offered to the Vietnamese public. It is expected to give well-grounded measures to test takers, and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) appears to meet the public's expectations. Over 30 years, IELTS has developed and undergone numerous changes, as well as been documented by Taylor and Falvey (2007), Davies (2008), and Weir and O'Sullivan (2017). The primary test of IELTS was the English Language Testing Service (ELTS), first introduced in 1980 by the British Council, in collaboration with the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) (now Cambridge Assessment English). ELTS was developed as an instrument for the Council to assess the English proficiency of international students awarded by the British Government for study or training in the United

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Kingdom. Since its debut in 1989, IELTS, with a four-part test (Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking), has gained widespread recognition and is used in most higher educational institutions. There have been some changes to the IELTS writing task, but the basic structure has remained with one exception (Read, 2015). After long-standing debate and extensive research, the three discipline-based modules: A. Physical Science and Technology, B: Life and Medical Sciences, and C: Arts and Social Sciences for reading and writing were reduced to just a single Academic Module for students in all subject areas.

Teaching, learning, and grading writing skills requires mastery of punctuation, spelling, grammatical and lexical ranges and structure, stylistic and judgement skills. Students' ability to organize and develop ideas is a significant skill for real-life communication and is viewed as a backwash effect of teaching and learning. In other words, it requires a complete range of linguistic skills as well as a knowledge base. In this paper, short essays written by engineering freshmen are collected and interpreted from four angles: Grammar, Vocabulary, Coherence and Cohesion, and Task achievement. There has been an increasing interest in the study of challenges in English composition in general. However, fewer attempts have been made to comprehensively analyze language, knowledge, and real-world gaps. Particularly, the absence of knowledge and real-world gap in their IELTS writing task 2 is striking. Hopefully, this article will contribute to the study of L2 composition within linguistics and the cross-cultural field.

Literature Review

Language is commonly examined in terms of whether (a) spoken or written language and (b) productive and receptive skills. According to Badger (2024), writing and speaking are grouped together as productive skills, but the former is used in written language and spoken language. Over the forty years of L2 composition study, much attention has been paid to interpreting challenges faced by L2 student writers that are attributed to their limited proficiency in the target language (Hamp-Lyons, 1991). Evan (2019) investigates the writing experiences and perceptions of Master's students, reveals their writing challenges, and makes recommendations on genre-based approaches, genre-sensitive pedagogy, and curriculum developers.

Nguyen and Nguyen (2022) conducted research on the problems and causes of taking IELTS writing task 2 for 205 IELTS learners from two centers in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The study outlines 12 problems and causes encountered by the participants and highlights the five most frequent problems, namely time constraint, paraphrasing, insufficient background knowledge, linking ideas, and writing confusing sentences, and four causes, such as Vietnamese influence, writing anxiety, lack of English exposure, and cultural barriers. Nghi and Truong (2023) explore the difficulties Vietnamese students encounter when learning academic writing in English and show a strong interest of most respondents in language learning, but their dissatisfaction and discontent with their English writing skills on account of insufficient practice time. Tran and Truong (2021) conducted a study on the frequencies of single-clause sentences and multi-clause sentences in IELTS writing task 2 and presented a close link between sentence types and IELTS composition band score. They point out that the lower the band score, the more single-clause sentences are available in a composition. The above studies focus

on analyzing grammatical range, accuracy, coherence, and cohesion. Moreover, fewer attempts have been made to find out and analyze experience and real-world knowledge gaps in IELTS writing task 2. Therefore, this study is fairly distinct from the previous works.

To fulfill the purpose of the study, the survey sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the language gaps in IELTS writing task 2 of engineering freshmen at DUT-UDN?
2. What are the experience and real-world knowledge gaps in IELTS writing task 2 for engineering freshmen in DUT-UDN?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

With a population of 101 engineering students taking a two-credit English composition course at the University of Da Nang, all participants are volunteers, and there is no compensation for their participation. 89 male and 12 female freshmen aged 18 enrolling in two programs: Embedded System and Electrical Communication Engineering in DUT-UDN must fulfill the language requirement to achieve their engineering degree. To be specific, the minimum requirement is a score of IELTS band 6.0. All participants did the university placement tests and were granted B1 or B2 within the Vietnamese Six-level Foreign Language Proficiency Framework in 2020. Then they were invited to a diagnostic writing test and a final term writing test, with a response rate of 100%. In addition, participants were requested to complete open questionnaires in Google Forms with a 100% response.

Design of the Study

Two hundred two short essays written by 101 engineering freshmen in the diagnostic tests and final-term tests at DUT-UDN are collected and analyzed in terms of four criteria suggested by the British Council, namely: Task Achievement, Coherence and Cohesion, Lexical Resource, and Grammatical Range and Accuracy. They include 101 diagnostic writing tasks and 101 final-term writing tests. Vocabulary size plays a pivotal role in IELTS writing scores. Particularly, it outlines the language gap, experience, and real-world knowledge gap. In addition, 10 open-ended questionnaires in Google Forms are designed to determine their writing learning habits, strategies, attitudes, opinions, and beliefs about teaching and learning academic writing.

Data collection & analysis

This work adopts a descriptive and qualitative approach, and the data are analyzed and interpreted in terms of language gaps, experience gaps, and real-world knowledge gaps. The detailed discussion is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1*A detailed discussion of the study*

Language gaps	Experience and real-world knowledge gaps
Lexical Resources	Typical examples
Grammar Range and Accuracy	Statistics
Coherence – Cohesion	Quotations

Findings

Research Question 1: What are the language gaps in IELTS writing task 2 of engineering freshmen in DUT-UDN?

Language gaps

Lexical Resources

Vocabulary Tiers

There is a school of thought that academic vocabulary is crucial in IELTS writing tests, and there should be some writing strategies to boost their academic vocabulary input. Milton et al. (2010) state, "The vocabulary size is the most important factor in determining success in writing, reading and listening and overall IELTS grades; more important than grammatical accuracy or the other factors" (p.96)

The three-tier vocabulary framework suggested by Beck et al. (2002) is exploited to analyze their writing in terms of general and academic vocabulary.

Tier 1 words

Tier 1 words are ubiquitous and frequently used in daily conversation and informal discourse. Therefore, these words are practical and functional but easy to understand and use. As a result, there is no need to teach or develop Tier 1 word vocabulary for them in IELTS writing.

Tier 2 words

With respect to academic vocabulary, Tier 2 words include high-utility words available in numerous academic domains and disciplines for intermediate English learners. It is vital to emphasize Tier 2 words in vocabulary instruction because of their valuable function and applicability to support their ideas, make arguments, and discuss evidence in their writing.

Tier 3 words

In distinction from Tier 2 words, Tier 3 words are more specialized and are notably absent in their IELTS writing part 2. In addition, Tier 3 words are low-frequency words limited to specific domains and fields (e.g., Chrysalis, filibuster, ambience, and others).

It is evident that academic English (Tier 2 and 3 words) deserves special attention because there is a strong correlation between students' vocabulary knowledge and their success as readers, learners, and even IELTS test takers. Nevertheless, the collected data has a highly limited range of academic vocabulary. The question is how to teach and assist them in building up and increasing the size of their academic English (Tier 2 and 3 words). There are three suggested

steps to guide them. Firstly, there is no doubt that IELTS reading passages can serve as an infinite source of academic vocabulary for them. Potential academic words are marked and selected to offer some instruction and information about them. Secondly, after mastering the words, let them rehearse and deepen their understanding of the new, varied uses and meanings by making new sentences to give them more chances to use these words in different collocations and contexts. Particularly, students are asked to construct their own general and academic vocabulary appendix during their prolonged learning process (See Table 2). It is considered a conscious process and action to recognize the distinction between these two categories and employ academic vocabulary in their writing.

Table 2*General and academic vocabulary appendix*

General English (Tier 1 words)	Academic English (Tier 2 and 3 words)
A lot of/ Many	A plethora of Myriad A Multitude of
Always	Invariably
Available	Prevalent
Basic	Rudimentary
Benefits	Merits
Careful	Sobering
Change	Alter
Choose	Take a punt
Condition	Well-being
Crowded	Densely-populated
Difficult	Uphill
Enough	Sufficient
Exciting	Exhilarating
Extremist	Fanatical
Famous	Notorious
Friendly	Approachable
Frightening	Intimidating
Growth	Proliferation
Human	Homo sapiens
Lazy	Sedentary
Long	Prolonged
Near	In the proximity of
Perfect	Impeccable
Reason	Culprit
Rich	Well-off
Tiring	Tedious
Watchful	Vigilant

Schnoor (2003) claims that dictionaries are categorized into two kinds: monolingual versus bilingual dictionaries. The former gives an explanation of the word in one language, L1, while the latter provides direct translations from L1 to L2. To be specific, bilingual dictionaries involve L1 equivalents of L2 words. So, it is easy to look a word up in a bilingual dictionary.

Monolingual dictionaries, on the other hand, provide information only in the target language (Fan, 2000). The survey of dictionary preference shows that 82 % of participants strongly favor bilingual dictionary platforms such as Google Translate, Tflat, and others rather than monolingual counterparts or thesauruses that are less popular with learners on account of their complicated explanations. Most of the participants stated that finding words in bilingual dictionaries is much easier and quicker, but it does not give collocations. They also argue that bilingual dictionaries give more than one meaning of a word without using them in a context, as an example, which is confusing. For example, they have a vague idea about "polite" in the English–Vietnamese dictionary. "Polite" is translated as "lễ phép, lịch sự, lịch thiệp" and they used it to make sentences as in the following examples:

- (1) Youngsters should be *polite* to the elderly.
- (2) She greeted me with a *polite* smile.
- (3) You should wear *polite* clothes to a job interview.

To clarify and explain how to use the word “polite” in these cases, monolingual dictionaries such as the Oxford Learner's Dictionary or the Cambridge Learner's Dictionary are efficient and functional. Examples (1) and (2) are correct because “polite” is used to show good manners or respect for the feelings of others, whilst the learner has wrong word use in example (3) with the collocation "polite clothes". "Formal wear" or "formal clothes" would be appropriate because "formal" can be used in the style of dress, speech, writing, behaviour, etc., and it means “very correct and suitable for official or important occasions”. It seems apparent that L1 transfer in the example is negative. According to Feng (2020), transfer is definite and is always negative from L1 to L2, and difficulties in L2 learning can be heralded by L1-L2 discrepancies. In this case, L1 is Vietnamese, and the differences between Vietnamese and English result in a negative L1 transfer. It is noted that most of them have an inability to develop decoding skills. That is the competence to recognize and extract meaningful information about the word from the context, and that results in inaccuracies in word choice and collocation.

Grammar

Hinkel (2004) claims that grammar teaching can be fruitful if it is cumulative. Notably, there are substantial discrepancies between their homework tasks and writing tests in terms of grammatical error-free. In other words, grammatical errors are extremely rare, with the great assistance of grammar check software programs like Grammarly, GrammarCheck, and SpinBot, but they make major grammatical mistakes in their writing tests. These grammar check programs should be viewed as complementary tools in autonomous learning, not an alternative to teaching. These programs are crucial to raise their awareness of grammatical issues and boost their language proficiency with correct sentence input. Nevertheless, when too many grammatical errors occur, they tend to ignore and fail to understand the suggestion of the software. It comes as no surprise to learn that the majority of respondents access free online Google Translate to transfer L1 messages to L2, but the meaning definitely changes from Vietnamese to English, as such technology is able to go beyond a surface level of grammatical accuracy but fails to ensure L2 writing style.

- (1) Người ta có xu hướng mua sắm quá mức là do đó là thói quen đến từ việc bị quá nhiều

áp lực và muốn làm một cái gì đó để giải tỏa.

(2) People tend to overshoot because it is a habit that comes from being under too much pressure and wanting to do something to relieve it.

(3) Excessive shopping often stems from a habitual response to stress, driven by the desire to alleviate pressure.

(2) translated by Google Translate is grammar-error free, but the language of (2) is not academic enough with numerous redundant words such as "comes from being", and "wanting to do something". That makes (2) lengthy and inappropriate in academic writing. (3) is a suggested correction with better wording. Specifically, student writers tend to compose in L1 and try to translate the text into L2, resulting in grammatical and lexical errors, unidiomatic and strange-sounding prose. (Wang, 2003).

Table 3

The most common grammatical mistakes in their essay writing

Common grammatical mistakes
1. Tenses
2. Prepositions
3. Part of speech
4. V-ing or To-inf
5. Subject and verb agreement
6. Present and past participles
7. Conjunctions
8. Comparisons
9. Relative pronouns
10. Passive voice
11. If conditions

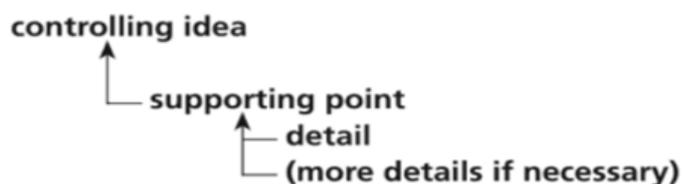
Table 3 outlines the most frequent grammatical mistakes in their essays. By far, the most frequently occurring grammatical mistakes found are tenses (present simple, past simple, and present perfect). The next two common mistakes involve the use of prepositions and parts of speech. Relative pronouns are the least frequent grammatical mistakes produced by the students.

Coherence – Cohesion

Chong and Ye (2020) define coherence as the logical progression of ideas and information, while cohesion refers to the connection of ideas and relationships between sentences" (p.5). In an essay, all ideas should relate to the thesis statement, and the supporting ideas in the main body paragraph should connect with the topic sentence. For coherence in writing, the sentences must bind together; that is, the movements from one sentence to the next counterpart must be logical and smooth. There must be no sudden jump. Some strategies, such as using repetition of key nouns, consistent pronouns, transition signals, and logical order, are introduced and applied to support writer learners.

Figure 1.

A suggested model of a well-written paragraph. (p.11)



The structure of a well-organized paragraph by Chin et al. (2012) is illustrated in Figure 1. Most participants stated that supporting and further explaining controlling was the most demanding and challenging for them because of their poor understanding and limited evidence. Hence, there is an urgent need to help them with this section. The student writers are conventionally introduced to how to write a well-ordered paragraph consisting of a controlling idea in a topic sentence, followed by reasoning and examples or substantial evidence to develop and support the controlling idea.

Research Question 2: What are the experience and real-world knowledge gaps in IELTS writing task 2 for engineering freshmen in DUT-UDN?

Experience and real-world knowledge gaps

In addition to linguistic competence, knowledge of content is also core to the writing teaching process and strategies. Learner writers are expected to express their personal experience and general knowledge on an issue to handle the task properly. The discussion of an issue of general interest and the disclosure of personal thoughts and viewpoints is, of course, a communicative purpose of IELTS writing task 2, and it is widely viewed as an argumentative genre. It should be noted that grammar and lexical correction do not guarantee high-quality academic writing. Writers are expected to reflect their in-depth knowledge and analytical skills on that topic. These expectations can be met by employing conventional supporting techniques such as critical reasoning, typical examples, statistics, and quotations. It would be, therefore, functional and useful for them to work on these supporting techniques. In addition to teaching these techniques, they have more chances to view writing rubrics with the requirements of supporting techniques in their grading.

Unfortunately, all three supporting techniques are absent in the body paragraphs of diagnostic writing tests, but reasoning is primarily exploited to support and develop the controlling ideas. Reasoning is the technique that a writer uses to explain where, how, and why the evidence supports the claim.

Table 4

Average frequency of examples, statistics, and quotations in 202 diagnostic and final term writing tests

Diagnostic writing tests (202)			Final-term tests (202)		
Examples	Statistics	Quotations	Examples	Statistics	Quotations
11	0	0	55	15	17

Without the introduction of substantial evidence in their supporting techniques, it can be seen that the frequency of examples, statistics, and quotations in diagnostic writing tests is much less than that of examples, statistics, and quotations in final-term writing tests. Eleven examples are occasionally used in 202 diagnostic writing tests, while statistics and quotations are completely absent. In other words, reasoning is a dominant way to support and elaborate their argument. In contrast, there is a surging use of examples in final-term writing tests, statistics, and quotations, which are nearly equal at 15 and 17, respectively. It can be seen that a product-oriented approach can work well to raise their awareness of knowledge content and narrow the knowledge content gaps.

Typical examples

Personal or impersonal examples

The most common question writer learners ask is whether giving personal or typical examples is appropriate. There is no straightforward answer because they are guided to write about their own experience. Let's consider the following example of their writing.

High-speed internet allows learners to save loading times of websites, videos, and other educational resources, ensuring that students don't waste time waiting for content to load.

Table 5

An example of developing or supporting the main argument

Topic sentence	High-speed internet can provide a significant boost in e-learning.
Reasoning	High-speed internet allows learners to save loading times of websites, videos, and other educational resources, ensuring that students don't waste time waiting for content to load.
Personal example	For example, I often use e-learning platforms to join online courses, download textbooks and materials, and watch recorded videos.
Typical example	Zoom, Ms-team, or Google Meet can serve as typical e-learning platforms, allowing learners to engage globally in virtual classes and interact with their classmates and teachers without technical interruption.

The learner gets their own example to illustrate and develop the topic sentence. A typical

example works better than a personal example in argumentative writing because of its art of persuasion. It is evident that making the writer disappear in giving examples can assure objective and strong argumentation, but avoid a subjective stance. Particularly, the typical example in this case can show their understanding of updated platforms as well as trendy teaching and learning methods.

Increasing cultural awareness and knowledge

According to the British Council, IELTS is widely recognized as an international test in 140 nations and 4,000 locations. Thus, cultural differences should be taken into consideration when giving personal examples in supporting techniques. To specify, when there are cultural differences between IELTS candidates and markers, personal examples are occasionally outside of the IELTS markers' awareness, which can lead to potential sources of misunderstanding. This approach is discussed to enable IELTS candidates to consciously recognize the influence of cultural factors in personal examples in their argumentative essays.

Table 6

An example of personal experience in the supporting idea

Topic sentence	Cultural activities can bring numerous financial gains
Reasoning	Producing a good movie can make a lot of earnings and boost tourism growth.
Example	For instance, the movie "Mai" directed by Tran Thanh can earn over 100 billion VND.

The gross of "Mai", a Vietnamese commercial film released in 2024, is mentioned to illustrate the financial rewards of cultural products. In this case, the concept of this film may be unfamiliar to foreign markets' culture and can lead to misunderstanding due to differences in social knowledge and relevance. Utilizing some internationally recognized highest-grossing movies, such as Titanic (1997) or Avatar (2009), to avoid intercultural communication barriers and guarantee communication across cultures is highly recommended. It is noted that the utilization of common culture or national identity in giving examples is still debated and controversial. The analysis of 202 IELTS writing task 2 samples reveals that Vietnamese past and current socio-economic events, ranging from Vietnamese wars and festivals to contemporary game shows and icons, are available in their examples to support and develop controlling ideas. Therefore, communication across cultures should be considered when giving examples to support and develop controlling ideas.

Sapir argues that "language does not exist apart from culture, that is, from the socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that determines the texture of our lives" (Sapir, 1921, p. 221). Language and culture are closely linked, and cultural practices influence how language is used in different contexts. They should bear in mind that understanding a language's culture is crucial, and language is not merely a system of communication but a medium through which cultural norms, values, and beliefs are taught and reinforced.

Statistics

Unlike examples, statistics are concise, relevant, and authentic with cited sources. Therefore, they are substantial and powerful supporting details, but are occasionally found in their academic essays. Most of the respondents claim that it is too challenging for them because they have to read and remember the right figures and cited sources of statistical data across a wide range of topics. They share a belief that this kind of supporting ideas is highly valuable and convincing because it doesn't work much to persuade readers or markers by using your own ideas. Here's an example of a statistical supporting technique:

- (1) According to FlexOS, by 2023, around 28% of employees globally will work part-time or full-time from home. This shows that the way people work is changing for the better.

The above example includes the cited source and time and shows a number, but the percentage "28% of employees globally work from home" cannot speak for itself and needs further explanation and interpretation to obtain the desired outcomes. It is suggested that they exploit such linking language to clarify further and talk about the source as: "the data also demonstrates ..."; "this article goes on to say" and others. Note that all of the 15 statistical data just mention the sources' names and titles of the sources, but the author is responsible for stating the information and data they are citing. For example, instead of mentioning the author of the article, they indirectly quote "According to CNN,"

The very low frequency of statistical data in their essays (15 cases in 202 essays) somehow reflects the absence of their background statistics and knowledge in this subject. Extensive reading is likely the major source of statistics-focused input to address the lack of statistical evidence. Statistics-focused input relates to the learners' reading and bearing in mind the statistical data, while statistics-focused output involves them using and quoting concise data to make their argument as efficiently as possible.

Quotations

Many quotations are found in articles, reports, advertisements, slogans, and other everyday materials. The question is how and why we quote in academic writing.

From the context-based perspective, a quotation is classified into two categories, namely (i) direct quotations and (ii) indirect quotations. Fetzer et al. (2015) view direct quotation as:

"verbatim speech report or as citation of something which has been said/ written before. Since it represents a discursive excerpt in a verbatim manner, it has generally been considered as non-evaluative use of language. Direct quotation, on the other hand, is defined as a reference to some prior speech report presented and evaluated from the present speaker's perspective, as reflected in deictic shifts". (p.250).

Here are some main rules for direct quotations. Firstly, reporting verbs such as "claim", "argue", "state", and others can appear before, in the middle of, or after borrowed information, and the reporting phrase "according to" can stand before or after but not in the middle. Secondly, including the source of the borrowed information with the reporting expression gives authority to your writing because it allows readers to trust your information. Finally, put quotation marks around information that you copy word for word from a source. Avoid using quotation marks

with paraphrases, summaries, or direct quotations. In contrast, to make indirect quotations grammatically well-formed, a backshift of tenses, time expressions, as well as subject and object changes is required. Here is an example of direct quotations from collected data.

- (1) Nelson Mandela said, "Education is the most powerful weapon that you can use to change the world."
- (2) Aristotle's words, "The roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet," reflect the hardships of education.
- (3) The former and gifted president Ho Chi Minh once said, "For the benefit of ten years, plant trees. For the benefit of a hundred years, cultivate people."

Direct quotations outnumber indirect quotations in their academic essay, but most are brief and easy to remember due to the time constraint of the IELTS writing test. These three examples include three direct quotes from famous people with three appropriate quotation marks. Nevertheless, most of the quotes are inserted without further explanation to support their controlling ideas. It is, therefore, crucial to remind them to employ quotes to demonstrate and clarify the main ideas, not just to take up space. From a pragmatic perspective, proverbs and quotes of famous or iconic people are ubiquitous and functional in academic citations because they allow writers to persuade and reinforce their argument or statement.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that the engineering freshmen at the University of Da Nang use Tier 1 words at much higher frequencies than Tier 2 and 3 words on account of their repetitive use and straightforward and simple meaning. In particular, they have marked preferences for word-by-word translation, which is very old-fashioned and is mostly utilized in their writing. Mother tongue inference is undoubtedly available and nearly unavoidable for limited and modest learners. It is a noticeable phenomenon in the learning of writing by non-native English learners. Dulay et al. (1982:77) view mother tongue inference as "the automatic transfer, due to habit, of the surface structure of the first language into the surface of the target language". That is to say, the learners recall their first language rules while they express their ideas and thoughts in the target language. There is a considerable similarity between the outcome of this study and that of Nguyen and Nguyen (2022) in terms of vocabulary in writing IELTS task 2. Specifically, 129 out of 205 participants in their study point out that being influenced by Vietnamese is one of the top problems the students have to handle.

In addition to lexical instruction, grammatical features are essential for any L2 teachers and learners in writing because it would be hard to understand their writing if grammatical errors occur with high frequency and impede communication. It is widely agreed that teaching the writing process and discourse and rhetorical features of a specific genre is much time-saving and unchallenging than teaching such language skills as lexis and grammar on account of the unlimited academic words and advanced, complicated, unfamiliar English grammar. To put it plainly, it takes years to master English Tiers 2 and 3 and advanced grammatical structures, and it is demanding to ask them to write academic essays without sufficient linguistic proficiency.

Participants admitted that they had devoted a great deal of time, energy, and effort to learning and mastering English grammar rules, but frequent grammatical mistakes disappoint and demotivate their writing process. Specifically, they explained that they were entirely familiar with some English grammar rules, such as tenses, passive voices, if conditions, and others, but putting these rules in writing is another story. Nghi and Truong (2023) also state that nearly 60 percent of students from grades 6 to 12 at the International Pacific School - Dong Na totally agree that grammar is always a difficult aspect of academic writing. Ferris and Hedgecock (2013) acknowledge and emphasize the significance of error treatment in exposing learners to their inaccuracy in grammar and limited grammatical ranges. Truscott (1999), representing the perspectives of teachers following process-oriented writing theories, argued that correcting errors in a written composition might help learners fix those errors. "Focused" and "Unfocused" correction feedback are discussed and differentiated in error correction. The former selects specific errors, such as tenses, to be corrected and ignores other errors, whilst the latter is involved in correcting all errors in learners' essays. The latter type is also viewed as "extensive" because it works on all existing errors. Extensive correction feedback is highly challenging and time-consuming, but efficient for learners on account of the myriad errors and new approaches to teaching and learning the writing process. That is, there is a shift from putting emphasis on grammar instruction and error correction to focusing on supporting ideas, drafting, revising, and peer reviewing. These changes allow students to get more productive and motivated to pay attention to ideas rather than grammar accuracy. In addition to offering skilled techniques and appropriate strategies for teaching L2 writing, grammar and vocabulary, learners should be guided to build their own thoughtful selection of sets of Tier words 2 and 3 and common grammar rules of formal written English for future use as well as do some pair review to recognize and correct some popular and repetitive lexical and grammatical mistakes in their work to boost substantial improvements for their learning.

Notably, this study presents some experience and real-world knowledge gaps that are not found in any previous studies in the literature review. Numerous advocates, including me, are inclined to use a communication approach to teach writing. Linguistic competence alone cannot guarantee a successful communication attempt. However, cultural knowledge, facts, and experience are paramount. In other words, the writer and reader should share a certain level of general knowledge, practices, beliefs, values, experience, and others to decode and encode the written message. Kramsch (1998) states "Language, " is the principle means whereby we conduct our social lives. When it is used in contexts of communication, it is bound up with culture in multiple and complex ways."

In sum, it is apparent that lexical and grammatical knowledge is a primary focus in IELTS writing task 2. Working on that knowledge is beneficial for students' performance in IELTS writing task 2 (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2022; Nghi & Truong, 2023). In addition to lexical and grammatical knowledge, writing improvement in this work concentrates on idea development and evidence. In other words, this study suggests that teaching and learning English composition rely not only on lexical-grammatical range and accuracy but also on content knowledge. It is commonly agreed that good writers are good readers (Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000; Langer & Flihan, 2000). To become good writers, students are recommended to read articles, books, and authentic online writing resources to extract the essential information and

evidence for their written composition rather than relying on their own viewpoints and ideas.

Conclusion

The study is hoped to benefit both L2 teachers and learners who aspire to make desirable progress in academic writing. In conjunction with teaching the writing process, discourse, and rhetorical features of text, it is essential to teach language skills that L2 writers need to succeed in mainstream university classes. The study with 202 collected short essays attempts to redress this perceived shortcoming by identifying and describing the formal syntactic and lexical characteristics of academic text and advocating the explicit teaching of these key structures and lexical chunks as well as put an emphasis on presenting evidence to support and develop the controlling ideas by teaching skills to argue as well as reason critically, give solid examples, cite statistical evidence. The awareness of communication across cultures in learning and teaching academic writing should be raised. It is evident that bridging the language, experience, and real-world knowledge gaps can greatly impact the test-takers' performance in IELTS writing task 2. Due to time and space constraints, pair reviews and feedback are not discussed, while the author tried to present a holistic approach to teaching and learning academic writing.

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