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APPROACHES TO TEACHING ESL ACADEMIC WRITING: A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – Academic writing skills are fundamental for students at tertiary level. Possessing these skills can aid students in their studies as they are mostly assessed based on their proficiency in writing skills. Due to this, the teaching of English academic writing has become pivotal for English as a second language (ESL) lecturers in ensuring students' abilities to write academically, while at the same time achieving the course learning outcomes. Therefore, this study aims to explore the teaching approaches employed by ESL lecturers in teaching English academic writing at Malaysian universities.

Methodology – Grounded in a multiple case study, four ESL lecturers from four different universities (i.e., two public and two private universities) were purposively selected as the research participants. Data collection was done through in-depth interviews, lesson observations, and document analysis. The data were analyzed thematically using thematic analysis and cross-case analyses which compare differences and similarities across cases.

Findings – Findings indicate that Malaysian ESL lecturers at public and private universities employed various teaching approaches, such as *teacher-centered traditional approach*, *process-genre approach*, *humanistic approach*, and *collaborative writing approach* in teaching English academic writing. These teaching approaches were employed by the ESL lecturers based on their knowledge of pedagogy, teaching experience and exposure to English academic writing, while at the same time adhering to the syllabus of their universities when catering to various students' writing proficiency.

Significance – This study provides insightful guidance to ESL/EFL lecturers teaching English academic writing. The findings will help them to select suitable teaching approaches to meet their students' needs, proficiency levels and to achieve learning objectives. ESL lecturers are also urged to enhance their

content, pedagogical, and technological pedagogical content knowledge in meeting the needs of 21st century students.

Keywords: ESL/EFL lecturers, academic writing, teaching approaches, Malaysian tertiary education.

INTRODUCTION

English language has always been important and plays an integral part in the Malaysian education system. Malaysian students have been exposed to the use of English language as early as their childhood education. At the tertiary level of education, English is used as the main medium of instruction across virtually all academic disciplines in almost all universities in Malaysia. This is due to the global spread of the English language and its role as a lingua franca, which has made it an important language for communication, socio-economic development, and social mobility (Rajadurai, 2010). Given these circumstances, the role and use of English at the tertiary level in Malaysia have increased social mobility and attracted many international students to further their studies here. This observation was made by Singh (2019), who pointed out that the use of the English language as the medium of instruction (MoI) in Malaysian higher education has drawn many international EFL students to further their studies in the country.

In this regard, proficiency in the English language is integral for tertiary students as they are expected to be proficient in the use of the language, and possess the necessary academic literacies, such as writing, reading, listening, and speaking skills in order to participate as part of the academic community university-wide and beyond. Consequently, Malaysian students, especially those in their undergraduate studies, are required to take an English academic writing course to develop and increase their English language proficiency, in especially writing skills (Zhai et al., 2022). As students progressed in their studies, they should be able to move from general writing practices which are done in school to a more concise, formal, and structured writing style that fulfils the needs of their field of study at the tertiary level (Adi Badiozaman, 2017). In this regard, students should be equipped with a good knowledge of English grammar, demonstrate the ability to construct comprehensible sentences, understand and apply the mechanics of writing and know how to reference published works (Azmar & Razali, 2024). Based on these criteria, writing at this level is seen as complex as it entails critical thinking on the part of the writers, and their ability to utilize their linguistic skills in delivering their claims and arguments in a clear and effective manner (Johari, 2018). This was also noted by Staples et al., (2016) who pointed out that good academic writing was the outcome of the careful and critical structuring of writing, and correct formatting of prose through the proficient use of the English language. Therefore, having good proficiency in the English language is extremely important for students at tertiary level to ensure success in their studies at the tertiary level.

The quest for suitable teaching approach to teach English academic writing has been a debateable issue among academics, researchers, and scholars. Past literature has cited that none of the teaching approaches in the field of ESL has been considered as the best to be employed by ESL/EFL lecturers in teaching English academic writing (Caldwell, 2012; Johari, 2018; Nordin & Mohammad, 2017; Too, 2017). Overall, most of the ESL/EFL lecturers utilized teaching approaches that they think are suitable and suit their diverse students' backgrounds, proficiency levels, purpose of the lessons, and the learning outcomes. Previous studies have also indicated that many ESL lecturers have been struggling in their search for the best or most suitable teaching approach to teach the technical course of English academic writing (Pour Mohammadi et al., 2012; Rahman, 2017). Hence, the focus of this study is to understand

how ESL lecturers in the Malaysian tertiary context teach English academic writing, is therefore, the focus of this study. The researchers hope that the findings of the study could help alleviate the concerns of ESL lecturers who are still struggling to improve their efforts in teaching English academic writing.

Issues on Teaching Approaches in English Academic Writing

In the context of Malaysian educational policies, there has been no specific policy or curriculum that was designed by the Malaysian Higher Education Ministry (MOHE) to govern the teaching and learning of English writing skills (Azmar & Razali, 2024). Moreover, according to Too (2017), ESL lecturers in Malaysian tertiary institutions are given the freedom and flexibility to teach their students as long as it follows and adheres to the academic standards prescribed by the Malaysian Qualification Agency (MQA). Due to this circumstance, ESL lecturers are found to have employed various teaching approaches to teach writing skills to their students while taking into consideration their students' needs and proficiency level, as well as the English language syllabus at the institution. As has been highlighted in past studies, one of the issues concerning the teaching of English academic writing was the lack of pedagogical skills among ESL lecturers. This weakness has in turn led to the incompetency in writing among their students (Yunus & Chan, 2016). This situation shows that the selection of teaching approaches did have a significant impact on the students' writing skills of whether an appropriate teaching approach could help the students to improve their writing skills.

One of the oldest but most popular teaching approaches employed by many ESL lecturers in teaching writing is the traditional product-based approach. This approach has long been used in language classrooms where students are expected to produce similar writing structure based on a sample/model writing. In this approach, students need to imitate the structure, vocabulary, and use of grammar from the sample/model of writing to produce their own. Hyland (2002) termed this as "students' *langue*" (p.7) as students need to pay attention to the use of language and vocabulary in producing a clear written text. However, this approach has been criticized by many as it does not emphasize the creativity of the students in using their own ideas and their language proficiency (Kee & Razali, 2019).

Another popular teaching approach employed by ESL lecturers is the process-based approach. The basis of this approach is that students are introduced and exposed to the processes of writing starting from pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, and lastly publishing. Flowers and Hayes (1981) in advocating the tenets of their Cognitive Process Theory have pointed out that writing is a recursive process where a writer moves back and forth while engaging in the writing process. This point of view was also emphasized by Silva (1990), arguing that the process-based approach would allow the writer to be the center of attention as she/he engaged in the process of discovery and self-expression. However, to ensure the success of this approach in the classroom, it requires a lot of effort and commitment from the ESL lecturers when they are teaching their students. This is because in every process of writing the lecturers are expected to provide comments and feedback to their students on the writing tasks. This seems to be a daunting task for the majority of ESL lecturers as it will consume a lot of their time when considering the huge number of students in the class, especially when individual comments are much needed (Azmar & Razali, 2024; Maarof et al., 2011).

The next teaching approach that is quite popular in the tertiary context is the process-genre approach. In this approach, the process-based approach is combined with the product-based approach but with a specific focus on the different genres of writing. This approach is mainly used by ESL lecturers in the tertiary context to meet the specific needs and demands of the students' academic program/field of study. In this approach, students need to employ the processes of writing i.e., pre-writing, drafting,

revising, editing, and publishing to meet the specific genre of writing. For this approach to be successful in its implementation, Rhalmi (2018), mentioned that students were required to have knowledge of the social context, having a clear purpose of writing and possess good linguistic skills. This is due to the differences in genres they differ in terms of their different structures, purposes, and linguistic features. Therefore, this approach seems to be quite challenging to be implemented in the language classroom, considering the fact that English is not the first language of the students. In a context where English is used as a second or as a foreign language, many of them will only possess low to intermediate levels of English proficiency.

The last teaching approach that seems to gain some interest among the ESL lecturers is the collaborative writing approach. According to Storch (2011), collaborative writing approach is a writing approach with two or more writers co-authoring a text. In collaborative writing, learners are expected to learn from one another when constructing sentences and exchanging ideas, which ultimately creates a two-way communication in a simultaneous way (Boud & Cohen, 2014). Usually, for the successful implementation of collaborative writing, students will have to work with more knowledgeable others (MKO) in the writing tasks which are done either in pairs or in groups. Che Mat (2020), who conducted a study among undergraduate students on the suitability of the collaborative writing approach, pointed that one of the lingering issues in collaborative writing is the linguistic and knowledge gap between the learners. As learners work together collaboratively in their writing tasks, there will be issues, such as miscommunication and the inability to exchange ideas. The different levels of language proficiency, especially between the lower proficiency students and the more knowledgeable other, i.e., advanced students working together, tend to give rise to many problems in the writing process.

Despite the availability of many teaching approaches in teaching writing skills, many ESL/EFL lecturers are still grappling with the issue of choosing a teaching approach that suits their individual expectations, as well as the needs of their students. Many factors can impact the choice of one's teaching approach, such as the ESL/EFL lecturers' educational background, past learning experience, teaching experience at the tertiary level and not to mention, factors, such as students' proficiency levels, their backgrounds, and the objectives of the specific lesson. When teaching English academic writing, all these factors can contribute to the choice of teaching approaches by ESL/EFL lecturers. Therefore, this study is conducted to explore the teaching approaches employed by Malaysian ESL lecturers in teaching English academic writing. The study is guided by the following question: how do ESL lecturers teach English academic writing in Malaysian higher education institutions?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To conduct this study, the researchers employed a qualitative research design. The qualitative research design is deemed as the most suitable for the present study as it allows the researchers to explore and have first-hand experience in understanding the issues of teaching English academic writing in a real-life context, examining the phenomenon from the lens of the participants themselves (Creswell, 2007). Moreover, according to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), a qualitative design allows the researchers to understand the perspectives of the participants and how they experience the phenomenon.

Research Design

To conduct the present study, the researchers employed an explanatory case study approach. The case study approach is deemed as the most suitable research approach for this study as it allows the

researchers to study specific or multiple groups of class(es) or organization(s) in real-life contexts that are bounded by space and time (Creswell, 2013). In the context of this study, the researchers employed a multiple case study approach, whereby they observed four classes of English academic writing at four different higher education institutions, i.e., two public universities and two private universities. The goal was to observe the teaching approaches employed by ESL lecturers in their teaching of English academic writing in actual classroom environments. The multiple case study approach was used as it would enable the researchers to look for similarities and make comparisons between cases in different situations (Gustafsson, 2017; Yin, 2018). On top of that, Miles et al., (2014) reiterated that by having more cases, greater results will be produced, and interpretations of cases will be much more compelling.

Research Participants

In selecting the participants for this study, the researchers used non-probability sampling, which is purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was used as the researchers believed that the specific selection of research participants according to a set of selection criteria could provide rich and in-depth insights of the participants, on the basis of their characteristics, knowledge, and experiences in relation to the phenomenon under investigation. A total of four ESL lecturers were purposively selected using criterion-based sampling from two public universities and two private universities in Malaysia. The criteria set by the researchers were that the lecturers: 1) possess at least a Master degree in the field of TESL/English studies/Linguistics or related fields, 2) have a minimum of two years teaching experience at the tertiary level, 3) teach English academic writing courses when the study was conducted, and 4) are permanent member of the academic staff. Based on these set of criteria, four ESL lecturers from four different universities were chosen to provide detailed data for the study. These four participants from the four different universities were individually interviewed observed in their teaching of English academic writing in classrooms. In addition, the documents that they used in their teaching, i.e., teaching materials, lesson plans, texts etc., were analysed multiple times until the point of saturation. The researchers had conducted at least 3-4 interview sessions and 3-4 observation sessions for each individual participants, and several documents used by each participant were analysed. All these data were triangulated and analysed until the researchers reached a point of saturation in the analyses. These phases of data collection, analyses and saturation of data will be further explained in the Research Procedures section below.

Before the commencement of the study, informed consent forms were distributed to the research participants so as to obtain confirmation of their willingness to participate in the study. In the Table 1 below, the researchers provide the participants' demographic details. This will help to clarify their educational backgrounds, years of teaching experience, places of employment, i.e., public or private universities which will fundamentally impact their selection of a particular teaching approach. These demographic details have helped the researchers to better understand the reasons behind the selection of a particular teaching approach employed by the ESL lecturers. The demographic details of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Details of Participants

Participant	Institution	Gender	Age	Academic Qualification
ESL Lecturer 1	Public University A	Female	36	Master (TESL)
ESL Lecturer 2	Public University B	Male	33	Master (Linguistics)
ESL Lecturer 3	Private University A	Male	33	Master (English and Professional Communication)
ESL Lecturer 4	Private University B	Female	28	Master (English as Second Language)

Research Instruments

The researchers employed multiple research instruments to optimize data collection procedures for the study. The main research instrument for the study is semi-structured in-depth interviews with the ESL lecturers to gauge understanding on the participants' selection of teaching approaches and the reasons for such selection. Upon conducting at least 3-4 interview sessions with each ESL lecturer, questions were constructed based on the research question of the study that is used to underpin the study which is how ESL lecturers teach English academic writing at Malaysian higher education institutions as what DeMarras (2004) mentioned, in-depth interviews are done between the researcher and the interviewees based on the questions related to the study. Before conducting the real interviews with the participants, a pilot study was conducted with two ESL lecturers from a private university (i.e., different institution than the research settings) and the interview questions were checked and validated with several other experienced qualitative researchers. A set of probing questions was also used during the interview sessions to guide the researchers.

Apart from conducting interview sessions, the researchers also carried out at least 3-4 lesson observation sessions in each ESL lecturers' classrooms to observe the teaching of English academic writing. By conducting lesson observations, it allows the researchers to gain first-hand experience of the participants' approaches in teaching, the teaching and learning process, and the interaction between ESL lecturers and their students in real-life context. Moreover, as mentioned by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), observation provides knowledge and information to the researchers to have subsequent/follow-up interviews with the research participants as it provides fresh perspectives on the issues and context under study as it depicts the real-life experiences of the participants. While conducting the observations, the researchers noted down descriptive and reflective notes using an observation protocol to help strengthen the findings.

Lastly, the researcher also collected several documents for analysis. These documents include the course outline of English academic writing course, sample of assignments, and teaching schedules which were collected from each ESL lecturers. Bowen (2009) stated that document analysis is a type of procedure in which the researcher collected related documents of the study to be analyzed, reviewed, and evaluated. By having these documents, it acts as supplementary data to provide in-depth and rich descriptions of the study (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). These documents were then used to triangulate the data to help corroborate the findings. Moreover, by collecting the teaching schedules, it helps the researchers to understand why ESL lecturers employed such teaching approaches as it relates to the students' interests and motivation. For example, in public university B, the schedule for English

academic writing was in the late evening, to be precise at 5 p.m. until 7 p.m. With such schedule, it is very difficult and challenging for the ESL lecturer to sustain the students' attention. On top of that, the ESL lecturer at public university B employed the traditional teaching approach in his teaching. In this case, the selection of teaching approach does play an important part in ensuring the success of the learning process that does not only meet the students' learning needs, their proficiency levels, but also in sustaining their interests and motivation and ultimately to help achieve the course learning outcomes.

Research Procedures

Data for the study was collected during the academic semester of September 2022/2023 at each research site. The institutions involved in the study are two public universities (i.e., A and B) and two private universities (i.e., A and B). Prior to data collection, letter of permission and approval to conduct the study was sent to the gatekeepers to obtain permission. Research participants were given informed consent forms to indicate their willingness and voluntary participation in which they can opt to withdraw from the study at any time.

There are two phases of data collection for the study. For the first phase, the researchers conducted lesson observations. The lesson observations were conducted for four times at each research sites based on the course duration of English academic writing at the institution. For public universities, the English academic writing course is a two-credit course (i.e., 2 hours) and for private universities the course is a three-credit (i.e., 3 hours). While conducting the observations, researchers noted down descriptive notes which consist of the learning environment, the teaching and learning process, interaction between ESL lecturers and their students, students' attitudes, and behaviours in the classroom and reflective notes based on the researchers' individual reflections (i.e., hunches, future questions that arise from the observations) on the lesson. However, no recording of the lesson was allowed by the gatekeepers.

In the second phase of data collection, the researchers conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with each ESL lecturer at their respective institution. The interviews were conducted three times for each participant to ensure that the researchers managed to collect ample data from each participant. The interview sessions lasted for about one hour for each participant and it was voice recorded for the purpose of data analysis. Each interview was then transcribed verbatim by the researchers. At the same time, the researchers also collected related documents, such as course outline, samples of assignments, and teaching schedules from each institution to help strengthen the findings of the study. Since the researchers adopted multiple case study approach, Yin's (2014) replication of logic was employed where similar research procedures, instruments and analysis were used in every case. This is to ensure standardization in conducting the research procedures across cases.

Data Analysis

Since the study adopted multiple case study approach in investigating the teaching approaches used by ESL lecturers in teaching English academic writing, the researchers used both thematic and cross-case analyses to analyse the findings. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is the foundation for all types of qualitative analysis where themes and codes are used to present the findings. Meanwhile, the researchers also conducted cross-case analysis in examining the comparisons and similarities between these cases in terms of the teaching approaches employed by the ESL lecturers. By using both thematic and cross-case analysis in the study, the findings are much more in-depth as the researchers looked at the comparisons and similarities between these cases.

In analysing the data sets, the researchers first employed the six-steps of thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006). The first step in thematic analysis is familiarization with the data. To be familiar with the data sets, all the interview sessions were transcribed verbatim by the researchers. All 12 interview transcripts were printed, read, and analysed by the researchers for at least three times to ensure the researchers have immersed into the data sets. Once the researchers have familiarized with the data sets, initial codes were generated for each interview transcripts. Then, categories were developed to group similar codes for each interview transcripts. After that, researchers then developed suitable themes based on the categories. The fifth step, the researchers then reviewed the themes to ensure its suitability in the study. Once the researchers have confirmed the themes, the last step is to define the themes as how they were used and conceptualized in the study.

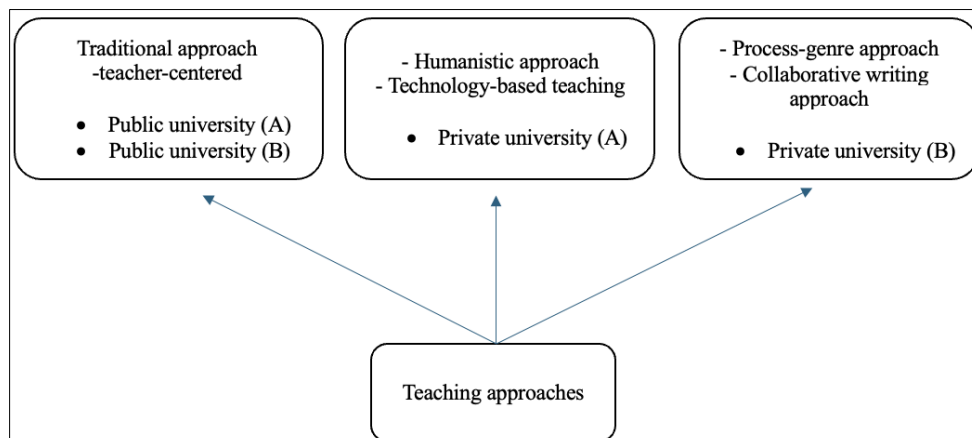
Apart from that, the researchers also conducted triangulation across the data sets to enhance the validity and reliability of the study's findings (Yin, 2018). In the triangulation method, the authors employed data triangulation where findings are triangulated from various sources (i.e., interview transcripts, lesson observation field notes, and document analysis) to corroborate the findings. Field notes that were taken during the lesson observations were also analysed to help strengthen the findings where researchers recorded reflective and descriptive notes. To further analyse the findings of the study in examining the comparisons and similarities across cases, the researchers also conducted cross-case analysis. Each case was analytically and critically compared between one another (i.e., public universities and private universities) to look for the teaching approaches employed by ESL lecturers in teaching English academic writing. Findings of the study are presented based on the emerging themes found in the analysis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings of the study indicate that Malaysian ESL lecturers employed various teaching approaches in teaching English academic writing. It was found that ESL lecturers from public universities employed similar teaching approach which is the *traditional teaching method* by focusing on *teacher-centered approach*. Meanwhile, ESL lecturers from private universities employed various teaching approaches which are *humanistic approach*, *technology-based teaching*, *process-genre based approach*, and *collaborative writing approach*. Summary of the findings are presented in figure 1.

Figure 1

English Academic Writing Course Teaching Approaches in the Malaysian Tertiary Context



Traditional Teaching Approach

Teacher-centered

The researchers found that the ESL lecturers at both public universities employed a similar teaching approach to teach English academic writing, which was the traditional Teacher-centered approach. The Teacher-centered approach can be defined as a teaching approach that focuses on the teacher, the one who plays the role as knowledge provider and dominant throughout the lesson. During the interview sessions, these ESL lecturers clearly mentioned that this was the approach they used in teaching their students. ESL Lecturer 1 from Public University A said,

“The teaching approach that I usually used is the teacher-centered, I would say...” (Public University Lecturer 1)

This was indeed the case from the lesson observations conducted by the researchers. From the lesson observed, it was obvious that ESL 1 lecturer employed traditional teaching approach by playing the major role as knowledge provider. There were less classroom interactions with the students as they were very quiet, passively receiving the knowledge input with no questions or interruptions throughout the lesson. Another characteristic of the teacher-centered approach that was observed in the classroom was the excessive use of textbook teaching. ESL Lecturer 1 relied heavily on the textbook as the main teaching material. According to the lecturer, at her institution, lecturers and students who were teaching and learning in the English academic writing course were using a similar, standardized textbook. Moreover, she also believed that in learning writing, students were best taught using the textbook. She said,

“...even when I teach my own students, I think it is always works when we are using the old method like using textbook and writing it back...” (Public University Lecturer 1)

The ESL lecturer was very contented in using the textbook in her teaching as she was influenced by her past learning experience when she was a student. In the second interview conducted, she mentioned that she was taught using a textbook and she believed that it worked in learning writing. Therefore, the same deep conviction was brought into her own teaching philosophy where she would encourage her students to use the textbook, and they were drilled with exercises from the textbook. She alluded that,

“...as for now, I do have a textbook that we use in class, and I did actually ask the students to use the textbook, and the textbook is the primary source...” (Public University Lecturer 1)

On another note, ESL Lecturer 2 from Public University B also employed a similar traditional teacher-centered approach in his teaching. Based on the lesson observations that were conducted four times at Public University B, it was observed that the lecturer also played the role as knowledge contributor in imparting knowledge to his students. In his teaching approach, the learning environment was passive, with students quietly learning by themselves and paying rapt attention to the lesson at hand. There were less interactions in the classroom, as the lecturer stood in front of the lecture hall and delivered his lecture to about 25 students. ESL Lecturer 2 also used the textbook in his teaching as the main teaching material in his teaching repertoire. He confessed that the only teaching material, i.e., lecture notes used in the classroom was content from the textbook and the students were also referring to the same main source. He alluded that,

“All from lecture notes. So basically, we have the same lecture notes - students also have the same thing and we go through it together in the class one by one because the lecture notes are already a lot, and the practices can be done together with the writing portfolio and other on-going assignments from week two until week fourteen. There are on-going assignments, and they can practice from there. So, the main material is the lecture notes...”
(Public University Lecturer 2)

According to ESL Lecturer 2, the lecture notes were compilations of notes and topical exercises that were used by all the ESL lecturers who were also teaching English academic writing at Public University B. To him, it was much easier to use the lecture notes as it was compiled based on the course syllabus and students could engage in the topical exercises after each lesson.

Based on the field notes of lesson observations, it was evident that ESL Lecturer 2 employed the teacher-centered approach in his teaching as there was only a one-way interaction mode in the lesson and students hardly asked or answered questions during the lesson. Serin (2018), reiterated that teachers who were proponents of the teacher-centered tended to use the textbook as their main source of teaching and this was evident in the lesson observations at both Public Universities A and B. This was perhaps due to the rigid syllabus of the English academic writing course at these institutions. The ESL lecturers were committed to using the textbook in their approach to teaching English academic writing. In sum, both ESL lecturers from the public universities were found to have employed a similar traditional teaching approach, which was the teacher-centered approach in teaching English academic writing to their undergraduate students.

Humanistic Approach

Human Values

The second theme that has emerged from the data analysis was the humanistic teaching approach employed by ESL Lecturer 3 from Private University A. The humanistic approach/pedagogy was first introduced and popularized by Maslow and Rogers in the 1990s. This type of pedagogy emphasizes human values in learning, where importance is given to students' needs. In this pedagogical method, teachers are expected to value the students' opinions, understand their feelings and emotions, and their way of obtaining knowledge (Tolstova & Levasheva, 2019). By embracing this pedagogy into his own teaching, ESL Lecturer 3 had emphasized the need to understand his students' background, their proficiency levels, as well as their expectations in learning academic writing. He had this to say,

“My main concern I think in general is just the students itself. The students and the topic. For the students' side, I need to know their backgrounds...their proficiency levels and whatnot...” (Private University Lecturer 3)

From this excerpt, it can be seen that ESL Lecturer 3 was prioritizing his students, especially on importance of their understanding of the process of academic writing. To ensure students' understanding of his lesson, he prepared the lessons using appropriate teaching materials that suit the students' abilities, while also paying attention to their attention span. The humanistic approach places a heavy emphasis on the unique needs of each student. He further alluded to humanistic pedagogy by saying,

“...it’s about you emphasize the human beings in your classroom. So whatever activities, whatever lessons, whatever assignments, it has to be evolved around human aspects. So, before you planned your lesson, you wear their shoes first...” (Private University Lecturer 3)

It is worth nothing that ESL Lecturer 3 had been teaching at Private University A for about five years and in that span of five years, he had met and taught students from different kinds of educational backgrounds, i.e., proficiency levels, abilities etc., in different programs which included the Bachelor of English Education, English Language and Finance, and Banking and Finance. In conducting these diverse programs, he would prepare the lessons according to the students’ levels of English proficiency, and assist them, especially when teaching Finance and Banking program students (FBF). He mentioned that,

“So, I imagined myself being FBF students, so I give them a list of topics, they choose from it and work around it. So, in a way, I do a lot of assisting there. Here (ED and EL students), I give them the freedom to choose the topic because in a way, I get the sense that they can think far beyond it. So, the humanistic pedagogy is now what I am trying to practice...” (Private University Lecturer 3)

By taking into account and understanding the students’ proficiency levels, it was easier for ESL Lecturer 3 to plan and prepare his lessons. According to him, usually at the beginning of the semester, he would give students a piece of paper where they were required to indicate their proficiency levels in the English language, their expectations of the course, the things that they would like to learn and other related questions. This feedback could help him to better understand the students. In short, ESL Lecturer 3 was practicing the humanistic teaching approach in teaching English academic writing.

Technology-based Teaching

Online Teaching Tools

The third emerging theme from the data analysis was technology-based teaching. This teaching approach was employed by ESL Lecturer 3 from Private University A in teaching English academic writing. This pedagogical approach can be defined as a teaching approach that utilizes technological tools in the classroom. Based on the input from the interview sessions, it became clear that ESL Lecturer 3 had been actively employing technology tools in his teaching ever since the Covid-19 pandemic.

“I tell them the kind of tools that we might use in the class like Padlet, MentiMeter, Google Doc, Google Slides...all those online tools. So, I mix around...use it here and there so that they don’t just sit down and listen, but they actually do something with it” (Private University Lecturer 3)

By clearly informing the students clearly about the teaching approach used in the classroom, ESL Lecturer 3 had created a lively and dynamic learning environment in his classroom. By doing this, the students became aware that they were not learning academic writing in the traditional approach of chalk-and-talk, but rather learning it in an interactive way. This was obvious in the lesson observations of this lecturer, he was found to have used various technology tools in his teaching. Below is a description of one of the lesson observations:

Lecturer used his iPad and projected lecture notes on the topic Common Types of Errors in Writing on the screen. He then provided links for students via the class group WhatsApp and asked students to write two-independent sentences in the table provided (i.e., in the link) by indicating their names. Students were then seen to participate in the activity by using their smartphones, iPad, laptops and started typing their sentences. After a few minutes, lecturer discussed the answers given by students and projected them on the screen. Lecturer continued the lesson for about one hour and then gave a short break. Lesson then resumed at 9.10 a.m. Lecturer shared another link in the class group WhatsApp called Miro. In the application, lecturer had prepared Avatars based on the students' names, and they had to choose the Avatars according to their mood at that point of time (i.e., while in the class). This was a short activity done by the lecturer to ensure the students are awake and focused during the lesson since the class started at 8 a.m. in the morning. After that, lecturer continued with the lesson by providing another link for an application called MentiMeter for students to indicate their levels of grammar knowledge before proceeding with the lesson (2nd Lesson observation).

In this particular classroom, ESL Lecturer 3 was seen as technology-savvy as he had used various technology tools and was quite proficient in utilizing online applications. Students were observed to be very participative in the class while engaging in the activities of a lesson. When using technology tools in the classroom, one of the benefits of using these multimedia applications is the ability to sustain students' attention and their motivation while learning. To conclude, ESL Lecturer 3 from Private University A employed two types of teaching approaches, which were humanistic teaching approach and technology-based teaching.

Process-based Approach

Process-based Writing

It was observed that ESL lecturer 4 from Private University B employed the process-based approach in teaching English academic writing in her classroom. In the process-based approach, students are first taught the processes of writing, i.e., pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing, and later learn the different types of writing. This teaching approach was employed by ESL lecturer 4 in accordance with the syllabus and the assessments required of the academic writing course at Private University B. Based on the interviews and document analysis, the researchers found that students at Private University B were tested on various types of essay writing in their English academic writing course, such as classification, cause and effect, and argumentative essays. As a result, the ESL lecturer mentioned that she had to employ process-based approach in her teaching to familiarize the students with the elements of essays and the processes of writing. Below is one of the lesson observations:

In the third lesson observation, the lecturer was teaching the students essay writing. She told the students that they were going to learn three different types of essays which are Classification, Cause and Effects, and Argumentative in chunks. She explained in the first essay, Classification essay, students only wrote introduction and conclusion paragraphs while for second essay, Cause and Effect essay, only body paragraphs were written and lastly for Argumentative essay, students had to produce a full complete essay. Lecturer then mentioned that students need to prepare drafts of their writing and later she would provide her comments. Then, students need to revise their writings based on the comments before they can finally submit their final writings (3rd Lesson Observation)

Based on the lesson observation carried out on this lecturer, the researchers concluded that ESL Lecturer 4 employed the process-based approach in her teaching. Students were introduced to the processes of writing where they discussed in pairs the main ideas in the pre-writing stage and then produced their first draft. She mentioned that,

“When I assigned them to do the tutorials or the assignments for essays, I will make sure that they revert back to me before the submission. They get to do that as many times as they want...so I will check, I will give comments accordingly and they are going to amend that. So, once I am satisfied, they can proceed with the submission...” (Private University Lecturer 4)

By producing drafts, students learned to be conscious of their writing, especially on aspects such as the formatting, structure, and in terms of linguistic features, such as accuracy of grammar, correct spelling, and appropriate use of vocabulary. By writing drafts, students are expected to produce writing with coherent use of language where they also pay attention to the organization of ideas (Burhansyah & Masrizal, 2021).

Collaborative Writing Approach

Pair and Group Writing

The last emerging theme was collaborative writing approach. This approach was the one employed by ESL Lecturer 4 from Private University B. Collaborative writing is an approach where two or more writers engaged in and work together to produce a piece of writing. Based on the lesson observations, it was found that students at Private University B worked together in pairs for their essay writing and for report writing, students had to work in groups of four or five students. This was the stated requirement in their coursework assessments. ESL Lecturer 4 had explained the collaborative writing approach with the following remarks,

“That depends on the scope of the assignments. If it is a pair assignment, then they have to discuss in pairs. But for the last assessment, report writing, they have to work in groups...” (Private University Lecturer 4)

This point of view was further supported in the lesson observations of ESL Lecturer 4. Below is a description of one of the lesson observations at Private University B:

The lecturer was explaining Classification Essay and the elements of essay writing to the students. Lecturer showed a sample of Classification Essay and explained the function and structure of a Classification Essay directly from the sample. Once done with the explanation, a writing activity was given to the students. Lecturer asked the students to work in pairs to write a Thesis Statement by providing three main ideas. While students were working with their pairs (mostly all of them were working with their tablemates), the lecturer walked around the classroom to check on the students' progress. Students were given 20 minutes to complete their writing task (i.e., writing the Thesis Statement). After 20 minutes, lecturer discussed the answers with the students and summarized the students' pair work and concluded that most of them were able to write the Thesis Statement (3rd Lesson Observation)

From on the lesson observation, it was clear that students worked collaboratively with one another on their writing tasks, for example in their essay writing. The collaboration helps the student-writers to improve their organization of ideas, choices of vocabulary, use of grammar, and correct spelling. Furthermore, collaborative writing among writers also sharpened their construction of ideas and fostered a positive learning atmosphere with peers. This was because the students had to learn how to accept and criticize each other's writing in a positive manner. These observations align with the findings in the study by Bueno-Alastuey and Martinez (2017), found that a high number of writers who engaged collaboratively in writing could produce a piece of writing that was accurate in terms of language and flow of ideas. Moreover, the collaborative writing approach could assist writers in fostering interaction between partners when co-constructing knowledge (Wirnawati & Cahyono, 2020). To conclude, the teaching approach employed by ESL Lecturer 4 at Private University B was based on a process-genre approach and a collaborative writing approach.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the findings of the study have shown that there were four emerging themes, and these themes cut across the cases in the study's comparisons between public and private universities in terms of the teaching approaches used by the ESL lecturers at their respective universities. It can be concluded that public universities involved in this study were much more rigid and traditional in their way of teaching. Meanwhile, private universities involved in this study were much more flexible where the ESL lecturers were seen to employ various teaching approaches as they were not confined to a specific use of module/textbook to teach academic writing.

All in all, in both research settings, the researchers have come to the conclusion that teaching English academic writing was challenging as there were many technical aspects, such as content knowledge (CK) and also pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) to pay attention to. Based on the findings of the study, the researchers have suggested that ESL lecturers equipped themselves with the knowledge-based component as was proposed by Shulman (1967). This component comprises content knowledge (CK) and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) which will meet the current needs of students, as well as the current demands of educational technological tools. For content knowledge (CK), ESL lecturers need to equip themselves with knowledge related to the content of English academic writing, specifically English for Academic Purposes (EAP). On the other hand, ESL lecturers also need to prepare themselves with pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) in teaching, which refers to knowledge that relates to their teaching practices and these include knowledge on teaching approaches, classroom management, and instruction suitable to the needs of students teachers learning to teach English academic writing. By having a strong understanding of the subject matter and use of suitable teaching methods based on the current students' needs, ESL lecturers can plan their English academic writing lessons more effectively to help students improve their writing skills through the use of more current and suitable technological tools. This includes selecting appropriate teaching approaches that suit students' diverse proficiency levels and backgrounds while providing assessments that fulfil the syllabus requirements to achieve the Course Learning Outcomes (CLO).

Apart from CK and PCK, ESL lecturers are also urged to enhance their technological pedagogical content knowledge or known as TPACK in teaching the 21st century classroom. Since the education field has evolved with the use of artificial intelligence (AI), fourth industrial revolution (IR 4.0) and Web 2.0, it is thus necessary for ESL lecturers to prepare themselves with technological literacy to supplement their teaching. Studies have shown that by integrating technology in language teaching,

more interesting and productive language lessons have emerged (Pazilah et al., 2019) and this has helped to boost students' interest and motivation in the language learning classroom (Ahmadi, 2018). In this regard, ESL lecturers have been urged to learn the use of some newer technological tools, such as automated writing evaluation (AWE) tools, AI-generated tools, collaboration-based, and game-based technological tools, such as Kahoot, Padlet, MentiMeter and others in their academic writing lessons.

Higher education institutions can also participate in this endeavor by providing professional support for their academic staff through regular offerings of seminars/webinars/trainings on CK, PCK and TPACK which are related to English academic writing in every academic semester. This will not only benefit the specific ESL lecturers who teach academic writing courses, but also to all other academic staff as academic writing is the main medium of communication in academe. By regularly having seminars/webinars/trainings, it helps to ensure that ESL lecturers stay up to date with their knowledge of CK, PCK and TPACK in teaching English academic writing courses. As a result, this provision of continuous professional development will help to improve the ESL lecturers' pedagogical skills in the teaching of academic writing. Online technological courses should also be offered to the academic staff to help them enhance and cultivate the use of technology in language classrooms. This is important as ESL lecturers nowadays are dealing with 21st century students who are digital natives and who tend to receive faster information online. The widespread use of technological tools in the classroom, it can help to boost students' attention, interest, and motivation especially in the English academic writing classroom.

To conclude, teaching English academic writing skills does entail a lot of technical parts, and thus ESL lecturers need to always update and enhance their pedagogical skills from time to time. The researchers have also suggested that future research explore the problems faced by young ESL lecturers, especially those who have a limited number of years of teaching experience in English academic writing in the tertiary education context. It is also worthwhile to look at their teaching methods so as to meet the diverse needs of students' backgrounds, language proficiency levels, and learning styles.

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APPENDIX A

Semi-structured Interview Questions

1. Please tell me a little bit about yourself, your education and professional background as an ESL lecturer.
2. Please tell me about your teaching hours, the course(s) you are currently teaching and for which program.
3. What would be your usual teaching routine as an ESL lecturer the moment you enter the classroom?
4. When did you start teaching writing course? Is it at the beginning of your career or just recently?
5. To you, what is academic writing?
6. How do you teach academic writing in the classroom?
7. Can you describe the teaching approach that you used when teaching academic writing?
8. How do you prepare teaching materials for your academic writing lessons?
9. What kinds of teaching materials that you incorporate in your academic writing lesson?
10. What is your main concern when teaching academic writing in the classroom?
11. How do you ensure your academic writing lesson meet the various students' proficiency levels?
12. How do you engage your students during your lesson?
13. Besides achieving the course learning outcomes (CLO), what other or personal goals do you want your students to achieve from your academic writing lessons?
14. How do you measure your students' writing performance?
15. How do you know whether your students have benefitted or learned something from your academic writing lessons?