International Journal of English Research
www.englishjournals.com
ISSN: 2455-2186
Received: 10-05-2023, Accepted: 10-06-2023, Published: 25-06-2023
Volume 9, Issue 2, 2023, Page No. 34-35

Bridging the writing gap: Remedies and strategies for overcoming the hurdles in academic english writing faced by Indian rural students

G Radha Madhavi
Assistant Professor (Ad-hoc), Department of English, Adikavi Nannaya University MSN Campus, Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh, India
DOI: https://doi.org/10.66856/english.2023.9.2.12133

Abstract
Academic English Writing continues to be a major challenge for many students from rural backgrounds in India. Although these students possess ideas, subject knowledge, and the willingness to succeed, they often struggle to express their thoughts effectively in written English. Limited exposure to English, mother-tongue influence, inadequate vocabulary, fear of grammatical errors, insufficient reading habits, and examination-oriented teaching practices contribute to this difficulty. The problem is not simply a lack of linguistic ability; it is also connected with the learning environment and the opportunities available to students. This paper examines the major hurdles faced by rural learners in academic writing and explores practical strategies to overcome them. It emphasises process-oriented writing, guided practice, reading habits, peer learning, constructive feedback, and the meaningful use of technology. The paper argues that academic writing can become an achievable skill when teachers recognise learners' backgrounds, encourage their individual voices, and provide continuous opportunities for improvement.

Keywords: Academic english writing, rural students, writing skills, mother-tongue influence, pedagogical strategies, remedial teaching, higher education

Introduction

Writing is one of the most important skills required for academic success. A student may understand a lesson perfectly, possess excellent subject knowledge, and have interesting ideas to share; yet, when asked to express those ideas in English, the same student may struggle to write even a meaningful paragraph. This is a familiar experience in many Indian rural classrooms.

For several rural students, English is not the language of everyday communication. Their conversations at home, interactions with friends, and social experiences generally take place in their mother tongue or regional language. English is often encountered mainly in textbooks, examinations, and classroom instruction. Consequently, students may know the basic rules of English but find it difficult to use the language independently while preparing assignments, answering descriptive questions, writing reports, or expressing their opinions.

Academic writing requires much more than grammatical knowledge. It involves understanding a subject, organising thoughts, selecting appropriate vocabulary, developing arguments, and presenting information in a clear and logical manner. When students have not received sufficient practice in these areas, writing becomes an intimidating task.

The real concern, therefore, is not whether rural students have ideas, but whether they have been given enough opportunities and guidance to express those ideas confidently in English. Bridging this gap requires a supportive approach that considers both the learner and the learning
environment.

Major Hurdles Faced by Rural Students

One of the primary difficulties is the lack of an English-speaking and writing environment. Students who rarely encounter English outside their classrooms may find it difficult to develop natural sentence patterns and an appropriate academic vocabulary. Limited exposure to newspapers, journals, books, and other reading materials further restricts their familiarity with written English.

Another important challenge is mother-tongue interference. Students naturally depend on the language they know best while constructing sentences in English. Differences in sentence structure, grammar, word order, and expressions may result in errors. However, such mistakes should be understood as part of the language-learning process rather than as evidence of poor ability.

Inadequate vocabulary and reading habits also affect writing development. Students sometimes depend on a limited collection of familiar words and repeatedly use the same expressions. They may understand a topic but struggle to explain it because they cannot find suitable words or connect their sentences effectively.

Psychological barriers deserve equal attention. Fear of grammatical mistakes, embarrassment, lack of confidence, and the possibility of criticism often prevent students from attempting longer answers. Some learners prefer memorising prepared paragraphs because they are afraid of writing independently. This dependence on memorisation restricts creativity, critical thinking, and the ability to construct original responses.

Institutional factors also contribute to the problem. Large classrooms, limited individual attention, insufficient writing activities, inadequate language resources, and examination-centred instruction can reduce opportunities for meaningful practice. Dabbara discusses the inadequate familiarity with English and insufficient practice that affect rural students' writing development (135–36). Similarly, Rahaman identifies limitations in teaching resources and pedagogical

practices in rural undergraduate institutions as important concerns.

Remedies and Strategies for Overcoming the Writing Gap

The first step towards improvement is to make writing a regular classroom activity rather than an occasional examination exercise. Students should be encouraged to write something every day, even if it consists of only five or six sentences. Describing a familiar place, narrating a personal experience, summarising a lesson, or writing a short opinion can gradually develop their confidence.

Process-oriented writing should be introduced as an essential classroom practice. Instead of expecting students to produce a perfect answer immediately, teachers can guide them through four stages: planning, drafting, revising, and editing. Initially, students can list their ideas and arrange them logically. They can then prepare a first draft, improve the organisation of their thoughts, and finally correct grammatical and spelling errors. This approach helps learners understand that good writing develops through continuous effort.

Reading and vocabulary development should go hand in hand with writing practice. Students can be encouraged to read short newspaper articles, stories, biographies, and subject-related passages. Teachers may introduce a word-a-day activity in which learners understand the meaning of a new word and use it in their own sentences. Gradually, this practice improves vocabulary, sentence construction, and familiarity with academic expressions.

Another useful strategy is guided writing and paragraph development. Teachers can begin with simple topics and provide outlines, keywords, introductory expressions, and model paragraphs. For example, students may first write about their college, their hometown, or the importance of education. Later, they can progress to academic topics, technical descriptions, report writing, and argumentative essays. Such gradual development prevents learners from feeling overwhelmed.

Peer learning and constructive feedback can make writing more interactive. Students may exchange their written work and identify areas where ideas are unclear or sentences need improvement. Teachers should avoid correcting every mistake in a discouraging manner. Instead, they can appreciate the ideas expressed and select a few recurring errors for explanation.

Encouragement should come before criticism because confidence is an essential foundation for improvement.

Technology can also provide valuable support. Digital dictionaries, grammar-learning applications, online reading materials, recorded lessons, and accessible writing resources can help students practise beyond classroom hours. AI-supported tools may be introduced as supplementary learning aids, provided students use them to understand corrections and improve their own writing rather than simply copying generated answers.

The role of the teacher remains central to this process. Teachers need to recognise that students enter the classroom with different educational experiences and levels of exposure. A patient teacher who understands these differences can transform writing from a source of anxiety into an opportunity for self-expression. Recent research on rural undergraduate writing instruction al highlights the importance of scaffolded learning, contextualised writing tasks, peer review, and technology-supported practice (K and Samnoel).

Conclusion

Bridging the academic writing gap among Indian rural students requires patience, understanding, and a consistent commitment to inclusive teaching. The difficulties they encounter are not permanent limitations. They are challenges that can be addressed through meaningful practice, reading, guidance, encouragement, and appropriate learning resources. Teachers must look beyond grammatical mistakes and recognise the thoughts and experiences that students are trying to communicate. Institutions, in turn, should provide opportunities for regular writing practice, teacher development, and access to learning resources. Ultimately, the objective of academic English writing instruction should not be to make every student sound identical, but to help each learner communicate ideas with clarity, confidence, and originality. Every student has a voice worth hearing. The responsibility of education is to provide the language, guidance, and confidence needed to bring that voice onto paper.

References

1. Bandura A. Self-efficacy, the exercise of control. W. H. Freeman,1997.
2. Canagarajah AS. Critical academic writing and multilingual students. University of Michigan Press,2002.
3. Cummins J. Cognitive/academic language proficiency, linguistic interdependence, the optimum age question and some other matters. Working Papers on Bilingualism,1979:19:121–129.
4. Dabbara Rajesh. Teaching Writing, The Problems Encountered by the Rural Students. Research Journal of English,2017:2(Special Issue 3):134–137. ORAY Publications.
5. Rahaman Md Sahinur. Teaching English at Undergraduate Level in Rural Indian Colleges, Hurdles and Opportunities. Elementary Education Online,2020:19(3):5390–5395. https://ilkogretim-online.org/index.php/pub/article/view/7742.
6. Ramanathan V. The English-vernacular divide, Postcolonial language politics and practice. Multilingual Matters,2005.