Challenges in teaching Academic English to EFL students: a case study on writing beliefs

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Abstract
Writing in a foreign language is widely recognized as a highly challenging skill to master. This perspective is grounded in the notion that writing reflects our 'pattern of thought' (Kaplan 1966, Connor 2011), and that there are multiple academic traditions of writing, each with its own rules and conventions. As a result, transitioning between different academic writing cultures can be a frustrating and confusing experience for both students and lecturers. This paper investigates the most prevalent challenges in teaching academic English to EFL students at the English Department of the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Sarajevo. The research findings indicate that EFL students lack critical thinking skills and tend to undervalue their own perspectives, leading to an overreliance on quoting and citing authors in their writing. This paper emphasizes the necessity for EAP lecturers to be well-versed in intercultural rhetoric and to effectively guide students in adapting their thinking and writing to a new academic culture.

Keywords: *Academic English, intercultural rhetoric, critical thinking, writing*

Introduction

Writing is a complex cognitive process that involves more than merely listing words on a piece of paper. Through words and grammar, we record our thoughts and beliefs, manually or digitally, into sentences, paragraphs, and texts. Among the various genres of writing, academic writing stands out for its formal style, tone, and vocabulary. The ability to write academically is a crucial skill that is typically first introduced during education in one's native language (L1).

With the internationalization of higher education worldwide, academic writing in English has become an essential skill for success in study programs delivered in English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI). This shift has transformed academic English into a global necessity, making proficiency in academic writing one of the key requirements.

In parallel with the rise in awareness of teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP), scholars around the world have consistently reported significant challenges in teaching EAP to EFL students (Aliakbari 2002, Nguyen 2005, Singh 2019, Baharudin et al. 2023). These challenges include difficulties in understanding complex academic vocabulary, learning different rhetorical structures, and adapting to the academic conventions prevalent in Anglo-American tradition of academic writing.

Despite the global focus on EAP, little has been said about the experiences of EFL Bosnian students in mastering EAP within EMI study programs, with few authors raising awareness of the importance of this topic (Jahić-Jašić & Pavlović 2024). Moreover, as both an EAP lecturer and the author of this paper, I have observed numerous struggles and challenges in teaching and learning EAP, highlighting the need for closer examination of this issue. In light of these considerations, this paper is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: Do EFL students in the English Department at the University of Sarajevo experience difficulties in mastering EAP?

RQ2: How do EFL students perceive academic writing in L1 (Bosnian)?

RQ3: How do EFL students perceive academic writing in L2 (English)?

RQ4: How can EAP teaching practices be improved, if necessary?

Theoretical background

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is a term that emerged in the 1980s, primarily as a consequence of the internationalization of higher education (HE) in English-speaking countries, particularly in the United Kingdom and the United States (Hamp-Lyons 2011). However, it is important to mention that, regardless of the internationalization trend, different academic communities worldwide, irrespective of their native language, have always had their own traditions of academic writing understood as '[…] the discovery, production, publication, and dissemination of scholarly knowledge' (Matkin & Riggar 1992: 5) or 'a specific type of writing used for academic goals by students and emerging scholars who are in the process of developing their own style of scientific writing' (Chuikova 2015: 974).

Therefore, it is important to distinguish between 'academic writing' and 'EAP', the latter being defined as 'an approach to language education based on a close identification of the specific language features, discourse practices, and communicative skills of target academic groups, and which recognizes the particular subject-matter needs and expertise of learners' (Hyland 2006, as cited in Hyland 2014: 1).

The inclusion of international students at universities in English-speaking countries presented teaching staff with challenges in understanding the issues in writing academic essays. Many essays produced by international students did not meet the requirements for structure, coherence, cohesion, argumentation, supporting evidence, etc. This situation led to the seminal study by Kaplan titled 'Cultural Thought Patterns in Intercultural Education' (1966), where he analysed over 600 essays and linked writing styles to the 'pattern of thought' shaped by education, society and culture.

Despite numerous criticisms regarding the perceived favouring of Anglo-American academic culture, Kaplan's study marked the emergence of a new interdisciplinary approach, initially defined as Contrastive Rhetoric (CR), aimed at understanding international students' cultures of academic writing. Over the years, the concept of CR rapidly evolved, and in the 1990s, the term was renamed intercultural rhetoric (IR). By replacing 'contrastive' with 'intercultural,' proponents of IR emphasized the importance of understanding different academic writing traditions without contrasting them as superior or inferior (Connor 1996, Connor 2011).

The idea of intercultural rhetoric gained further relevance as internationalization spread beyond the UK and the USA, reaching non-native English-speaking countries that adopted the Anglo-American educational model. Consequently, the recognition of the cultural background of writing in L1 is now supported by many linguists who argue that understanding the culture of academic writing in L1 can help lecturers identify intercultural differences and design tailor-made materials targeting students' needs (Pennycook 1994, Matsuda 1997, Leki & Carson 1997, Cadman 1997, Hyland & Hamp-Lyons 2004, Leki 2007, Casanave 2010, Hamp-Lyons 2011, Connor 2011, Blagojević 2012, Bhowmik & Chaudhuri 2022).

In Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), English holds the status of a foreign language and is studied at many universities across the country. Although internationalization at universities is not at a high level, education in the field of EAP is required for several reasons. Firstly, students have numerous mobility opportunities through Erasmus exchanges and by enrolling in EMI study programs abroad. Secondly, students studying English at the university level are required to produce various types of academic papers, including essays, seminar papers, and theses. Currently, EAP education in BiH is offered within English departments, with some courses being elective and others mandatory (Okičić 2023).

Methodology

This section outlines the research scenario, research design, data collection methods, research instruments, participants, and data analysis procedure.

Research scenario

This paper presents a reflective analysis of a teaching scenario encountered by an EAP lecturer (the author) while addressing challenges in teaching EAP to EFL students at the Department of English Language and Literature. Before describing the research design and instruments, it is essential to provide background on the teaching scenario that led to this paper. In the first year of study, English composition has traditionally been taught within the *Contemporary English Language 2*, a multi-modal course that includes vocabulary exercises, conversational classes, and essay writing.

When I began teaching this course a few years ago, I noticed that students' essay writing performance was significantly weaker compared to other components of the course. The primary issues identified were a lack of coherence within paragraphs (with no clear connection between topic sentences and supporting sentences), poor text cohesion, and the absence of a strong authorial voice in conclusions. Students were typically assigned agree/disagree essays, such as 'A big salary is much more important than job satisfaction. Do you agree or disagree? Provide relevant examples if necessary.' These essays often featured an overuse of emotional language—such as 'like,' 'love,' 'amazing,' 'hate,' and 'awful'—instead of adopting a calm, argumentative tone.

In response to these observations, I modified the existing syllabus to place greater emphasis on the writing process, transforming it into a *Critical Thinking and Argumentation* course.

Research design

The study was designed as action research due to the lecturer's—also the author's—curiosity about understanding the challenges EFL students face, as 'action research is often driven by a teacher's desire to explore their classroom environment (...) to gain insight into students' strengths and weaknesses, and to assess new teaching methods' (Mackey & Gass 2005: 218). The research design incorporates both qualitative and quantitative elements, allowing for triangulation through the use of multiple data collection instruments. This approach was selected in order to discuss topic by providing insights from various independent perspectives (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007: 141).

For this study, quantitative data were collected through a database of students' essay writing samples (lecturer's database), questionnaires, and focus group discussions.

Participants

A total of forty first-year EFL students, all aged 19, participated in this study. The sample was non-randomized and consisted of intact classes, which is suitable for action research as 'using intact classes, while not typical in experimental research, can enhance the face validity of certain types of research' (Mackey & Gass 2005: 143).

Data collection methods

The following data collection methods were employed: (a) a questionnaire, (b) a lecturer's database of examples from students' writing, and (c) focus group discussions (FGDs). The questionnaire was chosen because 'they are (...) extremely versatile, and uniquely capable of gathering a large amount of information quickly in a form that is readily processable (...) and are certainly the most often employed data collection devices' (Dörnyei & Taguchi 2009: 14-16).

The lecturer's database was developed by analysing the results of students' writing (argumentative essays) at the beginning and end of the semester (the research duration). This process aligns with action research guidelines, where 'the researcher may decide to create a database from information gathered from multiple sources' during the data-gathering phase (Mackey & Gass 2005: 217).

Focus group discussions were conducted to validate the findings from the questionnaires and to contribute to data triangulation. Focus groups were selected for their ability to provide 'in-depth interviews conducted in a group setting, which generate collective views and insights into the meanings behind those views, and help build a rich understanding of participants' experiences and beliefs' (Mishra 2016: 2).

Research instruments

1. Background questionnaire

To investigate students' writing beliefs, a Background Questionnaire adapted from Uysal (2008) was used. The questionnaire originally combined elements from Martin (1992) and Liebman (1992), but was modified by Uysal for the author's original research and was used in that form in this study as well. The questionnaire consists of five sections: (1) Writing experience in L1 (Bosnian), (2) Writing experience in L2 (English), (3) Personal attitude toward writing, (4) Self-assessed English proficiency, and (5) Personal information. The questionnaire includes 39 items, primarily closed-ended questions. It was translated from English to Bosnian to ensure validity, as 'questionnaires should be administered in the learner's native language, and participants should be given adequate time to provide accurate answers' (Mackey & Gass 2005: 96).

The questionnaire was used to explore:

- Freshmen students' writing beliefs developed during previous educational experiences (high school), focusing on L1 (Bosnian) writing classes.
- Freshmen students' writing beliefs developed during previous educational experiences (high school), focusing on L2 (English) writing experiences.

2. **Lecturer's database**

As previously mentioned, the research was inspired by the lecturer's observations of students' difficulties in producing a strong argumentative essay in academic English. The lecturer's comments and examples collected from 40 students' essays constitute the lecturer's database. The database was established to determine whether the new teaching approach resulted in progress.

3. **Focus group discussions**

Focus group discussions were 'based around stimulus' (Mackey & Gass 2005: 173) and were used to cross-check the findings from the questionnaires. Standard methodological guidelines were followed, with 10 to 12 participants per group (Mishra 2016: 2). Four (4) focus groups were organized, each consisting of ten (10) participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted during the focus groups. This format was chosen because 'in a semi-structured interview, the interviewer has a general direction but allows topics and issues, rather than strict questions, to guide the conversation' (Nunan 1992: 149).

The researcher moderated the focus group sessions. At the start of each session, participants were informed that the questionnaire questions would be read aloud and that they would have the opportunity to clarify or expand on their responses. All participants consented to the recording of the sessions. The discussions were transcribed, and key findings from the focus groups are presented in this paper. The transcriptions were used for qualitative analysis, with participants anonymized using codes P1, P2, P3, etc. (P'-participants) to ensure confidentiality.

Research site

The research took place at the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Sarajevo, during the summer semester of the 2023/2024 academic year, spanning three months. Participants were informed about the study in advance and provided their consent. However, the full purpose of the research was not disclosed to them to maintain the study's validity and to ensure that participants

remained at ease. As Mackey and Gass (2005) suggest, 'in some cases, it may be sufficient to inform participants that they are part of a study, while withholding certain details until after the research is concluded. In such cases, the study's purpose is described in broad terms' (p. 31).

Data collection procedure and analysis

The research was conducted over the course of the summer semester (15 weeks) and was divided into three phases. In the first phase, students were asked to write an argumentative essay without receiving any prior instruction. The essays were analysed by the lecturer, and key issues were documented in the lecturer's database. This phase lasted one week.

The second phase took place in week two, during which students completed a questionnaire. The responses were analysed using descriptive statistics. Focus group discussions were conducted in week three, and based on the findings, a revised syllabus was introduced in week four. During the first three weeks of the semester, general topics of academic writing were covered (see Table 5).

The implementation of the new syllabus occurred from weeks 4 to 15.

Results

This section is organized into two parts. First, the questionnaire findings are presented, followed by the key findings from the focus group discussions.

Questionnaire results

Participants

A total of forty students (100%) participated in the research. Table 1 provides general information about the participants, including the total number, age, gender distribution, year of study, department, and course.

Table 1: General information.

Category	Number	Percentage
Number of participants	40	100%
Age	19	-
Gender (Female)	32	80%
Gender (Male)	8	20%
Year of Study	Freshmen	-
Department	English Department, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Sarajevo	-
Course	Contemporary English Language 2	-

Table 2 gives an overview of the English learning timeline among participants.

Table 2: Learning English timeline.

Learning timeline	Number of respondents	Percentage
Since 1st Grade of Elementary School	25	62.5%
Since Early Age (4-5 years old)	15	37.5%

High school writing experience in Bosnian (L1)

All forty participants (100%) confirmed that they received writing instruction in their L1 (Bosnian) classes. The most common writing assignments were book reports, poetry analyses, and essays. None of the participants reported engaging in writing assignments from other genres, such as journals, argumentative essays, research papers, seminar papers, or summaries.

Table 3: Type of assignments done in high school Bosnian (L1) classes.

Assignment type	Number of participants	Percentage
Book reports	40	100%
Poetry analysis	40	100%
Descriptive essay	40	100%
Argumentative writing (discussing topics apart from book report/poem analysis)	0	0%

For formal writing tasks like book reports and poetry analyses, all forty participants (100%) stated that these assignments were completed by paraphrasing interpretations previously provided by the teacher in class or those found in school textbooks. The paraphrasing was done using introductory clauses such as 'As [the name of the author] claims/explains/highlights' without including in-text citations. None of the participants felt they should or could question theories, challenge the teacher's interpretation, or present alternative perspectives, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Confidence in L1 writing.

Writing type	Number of participants	Percentage
Essays	40	100%
Book reports & poetry (following teacher's interpretation)	40	100%
Question existing theories/authors and present a different perspective	0	0%

High school writing experience in English (L2)

Thirty-two participants (80%) reported that they did not receive any instruction on English composition, meaning they had no writing experience in English during their high school education. The remaining eight participants (20%) indicated that they received very basic instruction on writing essays in English, which only covered information about essay structure (introduction, body, conclusion). The structure of paragraphs (topic sentence, supporting sentence, thesis statement, etc.) was not discussed.

Focus group discussion

After the questionnaire revealed some striking findings, such as the fact that freshmen understand writing primarily as description and/or rephrasing of the teacher's words and interpretations, four focus groups were organized to clarify and double-check the results obtained from the questionnaire.

Regarding writing instruction in L1 (Bosnian) classes, all the students confirmed that the instructions focused explicitly on text organization (introduction, main part, conclusion) rather than content. Students interpreted the term 'essay topic' to mean 'bos. pismeni sastav,' which they associate with creative writing. In contrast, 'book report' and 'poetry analysis' were understood to be ' formal type of writing.'

30 participants (75%) confirmed that essay topics were usually announced in advance, allowing them time to prepare before in-class writing. Some example topics included: 'Describe the most important person in your life,' 'Describe the city/country you would like to visit,' and 'A friend in need is a friend indeed. Discuss.'

In terms of book reports/poetry analysis, 0% of students reported using critical thinking or questioning existing theories and interpretations. When asked to elaborate on this significant finding, the students provided the following comments and explanations:

P1: 'When analysing a book, our Bosnian teacher instructed us to memorize the interpretations of other scholars available in literary reviews. She never asked for our opinions on the topic. We wanted good grades, so we followed her instructions.'
P2: 'During a book report analysis, I tried to share my own perspective, but I was silenced and reminded that I should learn from textbooks and reviews. I almost got an F. After that, I never wanted to share my thoughts again.'
P3: 'We would get an A if we analysed a book or any other topic the way the teacher explained it. We were never asked for our opinions. Even if we tried, we were advised to stick to textbooks and reviews.'
P4: 'If I say what I think or question anything, I will get an F or a lower grade, which I don't want. Therefore, I will not ask questions.'

In response to these comments, the students expressed frustration with the situation but felt powerless to change it, as they had learned to perceive the teacher as the authority figure who sets the rules.

Regarding L2 classes (English), the questionnaire findings revealed that there was little instruction on writing. Focus group discussions were initiated to double-check and confirm the initial questionnaire findings. Of the 40 participants (100%), only 8 (20%) received any instruction on writing in English. However, all 8 (20%) of these participants confirmed that essays in English classes were exclusively descriptive and served to practice spelling and grammar, rather than focusing on content. Essay topics were always announced in advance, allowing students time to prepare for in-class writing. Some example topics, as reported by students, included: 'Describe your life 10 years from now,' 'Describe why a certain family member is important to you,' and 'If you won a million euros, what would you do?'

As the questionnaire results demonstrated a lack of critical thinking and questioning, the lecturer wanted to double-check the students' understanding of the term 'critical thinking,' as it represents the core essence of the university course they were enrolled in. In the context of the above, the lecturer aimed to assess whether any of the participants could demonstrate an understanding of critical thinking aligned with one of the following two definitions:

'Critical thinking is the ability to think carefully and rationally about the world around us and reach thoughtful conclusions about what to believe and what to do.' (Lau & Chan, 2015)

'Critical thinking refers to students' abilities to identify issues and assumptions, recognize important relationships, make correct inferences, evaluate evidence or authority, and deduce conclusions' (Tsui, 2002, str. 743).

Speaking of the term 'argumentation', the lecturer wanted to check whether any of the participants would describe the term in the light of the following definitions:

'A tool that helps us explain what we think and why we think it.' (Schick & Schubert 2017: 5)

'A reason or reasons why you support or oppose an idea or suggestion, or the process of explaining these reasons. ' (Cambridge Dictionary 2024).

In line with the above-mentioned definitions, students were asked two additional questions:

1. Did you hear the term 'critical thinking' during L1 and/or L2 high school classes? If yes, how would you explain it?

2. Did you hear the term 'argumentation' during L1 and/or L2 high school classes? If yes, how would you explain it?

Thirty-five participants (87.5%) reported that they had not heard the term 'critical thinking' during their high school education. When asked to explain it, they said it 'sounds like criticizing something or someone.' Five participants (12.5%) confirmed that they had heard the term during L1 classes but were quite uncertain about its meaning. All five described critical thinking as 'a comparison between good and bad.

Regarding 'argumentation,' all participants (100%) confirmed that they had heard the term during their high school education. They described argumentation as a 'fact,' understood as something 'that is well-known'.

Discussion

The research results reveal that the participants lacked sufficient knowledge of argumentation and critical thinking at the time of their enrolment in the university course on argumentative writing. Their understanding of writing was primarily described as creative writing. Additionally, the type of writing instruction reported by the participants suggests that writing was more extensively covered during L1 (Bosnian) classes, while it was almost completely neglected in L2 (English) classes.

As the findings confirm, participants viewed writing as organizing text in a structured form (introduction, main part, conclusion) rather than focusing on content production. Formal writing tasks, such as book reports or poetry analyses, were completed by paraphrasing published sources, authors, and teachers, without awareness or intention of developing a personal standpoint. This situation placed the lecturer in a challenging position, as it became clear that teaching materials must be adjusted to meet both the students' needs and the expectations of the course.

Given the students' lack of foundational knowledge in critical thinking and argumentation, the final structure of the modified syllabus topics per week was as follows:

Table 5: An overview of a new syllabus.

Week (2 classes per week)	***Topic***	***Activity***
Week 1	*Argumentative essay writing (no instructions given – diagnostic test, 45 minutes)* *Introduction to academic writing in English: general features*	*Guided reading & presentation*
Week 2	*Questionnaire (45 minutes)* *'Opinion' vs. 'argument'* *'Critical thinking' and 'argumentation' as key concepts of academic writing*	*Guided reading & recognizing and underlining opinions and arguments*
Week 3	*Focus group discussion (4 groups, 45 minutes each). Two additional classes organized to prevent information sharing among students on the discussion topics.*	*None*
Week 4	*Academic English as a different culture of thinking and writing introduction to intercultural rhetoric*	*Presentation & guided reading (selected topics from intercultural rhetoric: case studies of EFL students struggling with academic writing)*
Week 5	*Critical thinking (definition)* *Argumentation (definition)* *Who is a 'Critical Thinker'?*	*Presentation & guided reading (selected topics)* *Homework assignment*
Week 6	*Essay structure* *Paragraph structure (topic sentence and supporting sentences)* *Introduction* *Using relevant sources (university database and relevant internet sources)*	*Guided reading & analysis (argumentative essays)* *Interactive search for relevant sources* *Homework assignment*
Week 7	*Key vocabulary for argumentative writing*	*Presentation & guided reading & homework assignment*

Week (2 classes per week)	***Topic***	***Activity***
Week 8	*Introduction of the general field for final exam discussion (The specific topic will be provided during the final exam) Field: negative parental criticism in childhood*	*Presentation, guided reading, & homework assignment*
Week 9	*Guided reading*	*Discussion, underlining arguments, & questioning*
Weeks 10 and 11	*Guided reading*	*Discussion, underlining arguments, & questioning*
Weeks 12 and 13	*Guided reading* *1st draft of essay*	*Discussion, underlining arguments, & questioning* *Group work (peer to peer) & discussion*
Week 14	*Revision*	*Peer review (group work) & discussion*
Week 15	*Final examination*	*Observations (lecturer)*

The implementation of the new syllabus began in week 4, after the data were collected (as indicated in Table 5), starting with the introduction of the notion of intercultural rhetoric. The primary objective was to familiarize students with the linear structure of essays in Anglo-American writing culture, which avoids digressions and repetition and focuses on a 'to the point' approach. This was engaging for students, as they were accustomed to a circular style of writing that included multiple topics and digressions. The purpose of this illustration was not to show a 'right' or 'wrong' style of writing but to highlight different approaches, explaining writing as a process and demonstrating how it is expected to be done in different languages and cultures.

The concept of 'critical thinking' was particularly challenging to convey. To develop these skills, guided reading sessions were organized, with ad-hoc discussions on topics students did not have time to prepare for. One such topic was, 'The Education System in Bosnia and Herzegovina is of excellent quality and does not require reform.' This topic successfully elicited strong reactions, as all students disagreed but were initially hesitant to share their thoughts. To foster a critical thinking environment, I began questioning the topic, asking many questions aloud, and listing pros and cons, which stimulated student discussion.

A brief note on students' essays in the final examination

An analysis of forty essays (100%) provided an overall impression of the quality of argumentative writing, as shown in Table 6. While the quality of argumentative writing has significantly improved, the conclusion remains the most problematic part, still lacking the student's own voice. In 37 essays (92.5%), the conclusion consisted of retelling, repeating, summarizing, or rephrasing content previously mentioned in the introduction or body.

Table 6: An Overview of Essay Quality.

Aspect	**Observations**
Total essays analysed	40 (100%)

Aspect	Observations
Essay structure	All essays were organized into three parts: introduction, body, and conclusion.
Introduction	Established a clear link between general statements and the thesis statement in all essays.
Body	- Displayed visible organization (point-by-point or block pattern). - Identified relationships between topic sentences and supporting sentences. - Included arguments and counter-arguments with in-text citations.
Conclusion	- 37 out of 40 essays (92.5%) merely repeated and summarized previously mentioned arguments and counter-arguments. - Lacked the student's own voice.
Example conclusion	'To sum up, it can be concluded that negative criticism in childhood can cause a lot of damage in developing self-confidence (Goldsmith 2021: 13), while some believe that negative criticism is important for the development of discipline and determination (Smith 2013, Williams 2020). Therefore, it can be concluded that negative criticism has its pros and cons.'

Conclusion

In light of the findings, it can be concluded that EFL university students struggle with writing argumentative essays in academic English due to insufficient knowledge and understanding of how this type of writing is expected to be performed. This is a direct consequence of their prior educational environment, as the analysis revealed, where students come from high school settings that are highly teacher-oriented, valuing the opinions of authorities and not encouraging the development of a critical student voice. In such environments, learning is often perceived as the reproduction of content provided by teachers, authoritative figures, or textbooks. Additionally, the high school system seems to significantly neglect the teaching of argumentative writing, which explains why first-year students' writing tends to rely heavily on quotations rather than questioning and developing their own voice.

These findings suggest that teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP) to EFL students from different writing cultures involves not only linguistic adjustments but also cultural and cognitive shifts. Therefore, incorporating intercultural rhetoric into the teaching process could significantly enhance the quality of the EAP syllabus, which should be carefully designed to go beyond mere academic vocabulary and grammar, helping students understand the root of their difficulties.

In other words, by explaining writing as a reflection of beliefs shaped by culture, education, and society, educators can empower students to view EAP courses as opportunities to learn how to think and write in a new academic culture. This new culture should not be seen as superior or inferior, but simply different, with the choice of writing style depending on the writer's purpose and target audience.

Regarding the limitations of this study, there is significant room for improvement. First, the research was limited in terms of sampling, as it was conducted with an intact class. For a more comprehensive understanding and to verify the findings of this paper, which may serve as a starting point, a more representative sample (randomized) should be used, along with a methodological framework that incorporates additional research instruments (triangulation). A larger team of high school teachers and EAP lecturers across Bosnia and Herzegovina should also be encouraged to participate, thereby making the final conclusions more relevant and ideally supporting the development of critical thinking and critical thinkers within the country's education system.

In terms of pedagogical implications, this paper is primarily aimed at EAP lecturers who share a similar academic culture of writing in L1 and face similar challenges in EAP teaching, with the hope of inspiring interest in exploring the topic and exchanging experiences to develop new teaching practices.

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