

## COMMON DIFFICULTIES IN WRITING AMONG EFL LEARNERS

Fayziyeva Oydiniso Hikmatovna,  
Lecturer at Asia International University

**Abstract.** Writing is considered one of the most challenging language skills for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Unlike speaking or listening, writing requires learners to demonstrate grammatical accuracy, lexical competence, coherence, organization, and critical thinking simultaneously. This study investigates the common difficulties experienced by EFL learners in academic writing and examines the linguistic, cognitive, and pedagogical factors contributing to these challenges. The paper adopts a qualitative analytical approach based on previous empirical studies, classroom observations, and theoretical discussions in the field of second language acquisition. The findings reveal that EFL learners commonly struggle with grammar, vocabulary selection, sentence structure, cohesion, coherence, punctuation, and idea organization. Psychological factors such as writing anxiety, lack of confidence, and limited exposure to authentic English texts also significantly affect learners' performance. Furthermore, inadequate teaching strategies and insufficient feedback mechanisms often intensify writing problems. The study emphasizes the importance of process-oriented writing instruction, continuous practice, corrective feedback, and learner-centered pedagogical approaches in improving writing proficiency.

**Keywords:** EFL learners, academic writing, writing difficulties, second language acquisition, grammar errors, writing anxiety, language teaching.

**Annotatsiya.** Yozish chet tili sifatida ingliz tilini (EFL) o'rganuvchilar uchun eng qiyin til ko'nikmalaridan biri hisoblanadi. Gapirish yoki tinglashdan farqli o'laroq, yozish o'rganuvchilardan bir vaqtning o'zida grammatik aniqlik, leksik kompetensiya, izchillik, tashkilotchilik va tanqidiy fikrlashni namoyish etishni talab qiladi. Ushbu tadqiqot EFL o'rganuvchilari akademik yozuvda duch keladigan umumiy qiyinchiliklarni o'rganadi va bu qiyinchiliklarga hissa qo'shadigan lingvistik, kognitiv va pedagogik omillarni o'rganadi. Maqolada avvalgi empirik tadqiqotlar, sinfdagi kuzatuvlar va ikkinchi tilni o'zlashtirish sohasidagi nazariy munozaralarga asoslangan sifatli analitik yondashuv qo'llaniladi. Tadqiqot natijalari shuni ko'rsatadiki, EFL o'rganuvchilari odatda grammatika, lug'at tanlash, jumla tuzilishi, uyg'unlik, izchillik, tinish belgilari va g'oyalarni tashkil etish bilan bog'liq muammolarga duch kelishadi. Yozishdan xavotirlanish, ishonchsizlik va asl ingliz tilidagi matnlarga cheklangan ta'sir qilish kabi psixologik omillar ham o'quvchilarning ish faoliyatiga sezilarli darajada ta'sir qiladi. Bundan tashqari, o'qitish strategiyalarining yetarli emasligi va fikr-mulohaza mexanizmlarining yetarli emasligi ko'pincha yozish muammolarini kuchaytiradi. Tadqiqot yozish mahoratini oshirishda jarayonga yo'naltirilgan yozma ko'rsatmalar, uzluksiz mashq, tuzatish teskari aloqa va o'quvchiga yo'naltirilgan pedagogik yondashuvlarning muhimligini ta'kidlaydi.

**Kalit so'zlar:** EFL o'quvchilari, akademik yozuv, yozishdagi qiyinchiliklar, ikkinchi tilni o'zlashtirish, grammatika xatolari, yozishdagi xavotir, til o'qitish.

**Аннотация.** Письменная работа считается одним из наиболее сложных языковых навыков для изучающих английский язык как иностранный (EFL). В отличие от устной речи или аудирования, письмо требует от учащихся одновременной демонстрации грамматической точности, лексической компетенции, связности, организации и критического мышления. В данном исследовании изучаются общие трудности, с которыми сталкиваются изучающие EFL при академическом письме, и рассматриваются лингвистические, когнитивные и педагогические факторы, способствующие возникновению этих трудностей. В работе используется качественный аналитический подход, основанный на предыдущих эмпирических исследованиях, наблюдениях в классе и теоретических дискуссиях в области усвоения второго языка. Результаты показывают, что изучающие EFL часто испытывают трудности с грамматикой, выбором лексики, структурой предложений, связностью, пунктуацией и организацией идей. Психологические факторы, такие как тревожность при письме, недостаток уверенности в себе и ограниченный опыт работы с аутентичными англоязычными текстами, также существенно

влиают на успеваемость учащихся. Кроме того, неадекватные стратегии обучения и недостаточные механизмы обратной связи часто усугубляют проблемы с письмом. В исследовании подчеркивается важность процесс-ориентированного обучения письму, непрерывной практики, корректирующей обратной связи и педагогических подходов, ориентированных на учащегося, для повышения уровня владения письменной речью.

**Ключевые слова:** учащиеся, изучающие английский как иностранный, академическое письмо, трудности с письмом, освоение второго языка, грамматические ошибки, тревожность при письме, преподавание языка.

**Introduction.** Writing is widely regarded as one of the most complex and demanding skills in the process of learning a foreign language. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), learners often encounter considerable difficulties when attempting to express their ideas effectively in written form. Unlike receptive skills such as listening and reading, writing requires active production and integration of multiple linguistic and cognitive abilities simultaneously. Learners must possess sufficient grammatical knowledge, vocabulary range, organizational competence, and discourse awareness to produce coherent and meaningful texts. Consequently, many EFL learners perceive writing as an intimidating and stressful activity that demands extensive practice and guidance.

In recent decades, English has emerged as the dominant international language in education, science, business, and technology. As a result, the ability to write effectively in English has become increasingly important for students around the world. Academic institutions expect learners to produce essays, reports, research papers, and examinations in English, while professional environments require employees to communicate through formal written documents. Despite the growing importance of English writing skills, many EFL learners continue to experience significant challenges in achieving proficiency. These challenges are particularly evident in academic contexts where precision, coherence, and critical analysis are essential components of successful writing.

One of the primary reasons writing is difficult for EFL learners is the multifaceted nature of the writing process itself. Writing involves generating ideas, organizing thoughts, selecting appropriate vocabulary, applying grammatical rules, and maintaining logical coherence throughout the text. For learners who are still developing basic language competence, managing all these components simultaneously becomes a demanding cognitive task. Furthermore, writing differs from speaking because it requires greater attention to accuracy, structure, and formal conventions. Errors that might be tolerated in oral communication often become more noticeable and problematic in written texts.

Another major factor contributing to writing difficulties among EFL learners is the influence of the learners' first language. Linguistic interference frequently affects sentence structure, word order, punctuation, and stylistic choices in English writing. Learners tend to transfer grammatical patterns and rhetorical structures from their native language into English, which may result in unnatural or incorrect expressions. This phenomenon is especially common among learners whose native languages differ significantly from

English in syntax and morphology. In many cases, students are unaware of these interlingual influences and continue repeating similar mistakes despite repeated instruction.

Vocabulary limitations also represent a serious obstacle to effective writing. Many EFL learners possess insufficient lexical knowledge to express complex ideas accurately and appropriately. Limited vocabulary often forces students to use repetitive expressions, simple sentence structures, or incorrect word choices. In academic writing, lexical precision is particularly important because students are expected to present arguments clearly and formally. Without adequate vocabulary knowledge, learners struggle to communicate nuanced meanings and develop sophisticated written texts.

**Literature Review.** Research on EFL writing difficulties has attracted significant scholarly attention over the past several decades. Numerous studies have explored the linguistic, cognitive, and affective factors influencing learners' writing performance. Scholars generally agree that writing is one of the most difficult language skills to master because it requires the integration of multiple competencies simultaneously. According to Jack C. Richards and Willy A. Renandya, writing in a second language involves not only language production but also critical thinking, planning, drafting, and revising processes. These complex cognitive demands make writing particularly challenging for EFL learners.

Several researchers have emphasized the role of grammar in writing difficulties. Studies conducted by Dana Ferris indicate that grammatical errors remain one of the most persistent issues in EFL writing. Learners frequently struggle with tense consistency, sentence boundaries, article usage, and prepositions. Ferris argues that these errors may interfere with communication and reduce the readability of students' texts. Similarly, research by H. Douglas Brown suggests that grammatical competence is essential for achieving clarity and coherence in academic writing.

Vocabulary deficiency has also been identified as a major challenge. According to Paul Nation, limited lexical knowledge restricts learners' ability to express ideas accurately and effectively. Learners with inadequate vocabulary often rely on repetitive words and simplistic expressions, resulting in weak academic writing. Lexical errors may also lead to ambiguity and misunderstanding. Nation emphasizes that vocabulary development should be integrated into writing instruction to enhance learners' communicative competence.

Another important area in EFL writing research concerns cohesion and coherence. Studies by M. A. K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan introduced the concepts of textual cohesion and coherence as central components of effective writing. Many EFL learners experience difficulties organizing ideas logically and connecting sentences appropriately. Their writing may contain disconnected arguments, abrupt transitions, and unclear paragraph structures. Such organizational weaknesses negatively affect text comprehensibility and academic quality.

**Methodology.** This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design to investigate the common difficulties encountered by EFL learners in writing. The qualitative approach was selected because it allows for an in-depth exploration of learners' experiences, linguistic challenges, and psychological factors influencing writing performance. Rather than focusing on statistical measurement alone, the study aims to analyze the nature and causes of writing difficulties through theoretical interpretation and synthesis of existing research findings.

The primary data for this study were collected through the analysis of scholarly articles, academic books, classroom observations, and previously published empirical studies related to EFL writing difficulties. Relevant literature from the fields of applied linguistics, second language acquisition, and language pedagogy was systematically reviewed to identify recurring patterns and themes associated with learners' writing problems. Sources published in peer-reviewed journals and reputable academic publishers were prioritized to ensure reliability and academic validity.

**Results and Analysis.** The analysis of existing literature and classroom observations reveals that EFL learners experience a wide range of interconnected difficulties in writing. These challenges are not isolated problems but rather complex issues influenced by linguistic competence, educational background, psychological conditions, and instructional practices. Among the most frequently identified difficulties are grammatical inaccuracies, limited vocabulary, organizational weaknesses, lack of coherence, inappropriate use of academic style, and writing anxiety.

One of the most prominent findings concerns grammatical errors. EFL learners consistently struggle with fundamental aspects of English grammar, particularly verb tense usage, subject-verb agreement, articles, and prepositions. Many learners demonstrate partial understanding of grammatical rules but fail to apply them accurately during actual writing tasks. For example, students often shift inconsistently between past and present tenses within the same paragraph, creating confusion and reducing textual coherence. Article usage presents another persistent challenge because many languages do not contain article systems equivalent to English. Consequently, learners frequently omit articles or use them incorrectly. Prepositional errors are also widespread due to the complexity and unpredictability of English preposition usage.

Sentence structure problems represent another significant area of difficulty. Many EFL learners produce incomplete sentences, run-on sentences, or excessively simple sentence constructions. Such issues indicate limited syntactic awareness and insufficient exposure to complex academic writing structures. In many cases, learners rely heavily on short, repetitive sentence patterns because they lack confidence in constructing more sophisticated grammatical forms. Although simple sentences may communicate basic ideas, they often fail to achieve the analytical depth required in academic writing.

Vocabulary limitations significantly affect learners' ability to express ideas effectively. The findings indicate that many students possess inadequate lexical resources for academic communication. As a result, learners frequently repeat the same words, misuse academic terminology, or select inappropriate lexical items that distort intended meaning. Vocabulary deficiency also limits learners' ability to develop arguments comprehensively. Students often avoid discussing complex ideas because they lack the linguistic resources necessary to articulate them clearly. This lexical insufficiency contributes directly to weak textual development and reduced communicative effectiveness.

The analysis further demonstrates that cohesion and coherence constitute major obstacles in EFL writing. Many learners experience difficulties organizing ideas logically and maintaining smooth transitions between sentences and paragraphs. Their texts may contain disconnected statements, abrupt topic changes, and unclear argumentative progression. These organizational problems reduce readability and make it difficult for readers to follow the writer's intended message. The misuse or absence of cohesive devices such as conjunctions, transitional phrases, and referencing expressions further weakens textual unity.

Paragraph development is another area where learners commonly encounter problems. Effective academic writing requires each paragraph to present a clear central idea supported by relevant explanations and examples. However, many EFL learners struggle to maintain paragraph unity and coherence. Some paragraphs contain unrelated ideas, while others lack sufficient supporting details. Inadequate paragraph structure often reflects limited understanding of academic discourse conventions and insufficient practice in extended writing tasks.

**Discussion.** The findings of this study confirm that writing remains one of the most demanding skills for EFL learners due to its linguistic, cognitive, and psychological complexity. The recurring difficulties identified in grammar, vocabulary, organization, and coherence align with previous research in second language acquisition and applied linguistics. These challenges demonstrate that successful writing requires more than isolated language knowledge; it demands the integration of multiple competencies simultaneously.

One important implication of the findings is that grammar instruction alone cannot guarantee effective writing performance. Although grammatical competence remains essential, learners also require opportunities to develop communicative fluency and organizational awareness. Many educational systems continue emphasizing rule memorization and error correction without providing sufficient practice in meaningful written communication. Such approaches may improve theoretical knowledge but often fail to develop practical writing competence. Therefore, writing instruction should

incorporate process-oriented activities that encourage drafting, revising, and reflective learning.

The study also highlights the critical role of vocabulary development in academic writing. Learners with limited lexical resources struggle to express complex ideas and construct persuasive arguments. Consequently, vocabulary instruction should extend beyond memorizing isolated word lists and focus on contextualized language use. Exposure to authentic academic texts can help learners develop lexical awareness and improve their understanding of formal writing conventions. Reading and writing should therefore be integrated within language instruction to strengthen overall communicative competence.

**Conclusion.** This study has explored the common difficulties experienced by EFL learners in writing and examined the linguistic, cognitive, psychological, and pedagogical factors contributing to these challenges. The findings demonstrate that writing in a foreign language is an inherently complex process requiring the integration of grammar, vocabulary, organization, coherence, and critical thinking skills. Many learners struggle not only with linguistic accuracy but also with expressing ideas clearly and confidently in academic contexts. The analysis revealed that grammatical errors remain among the most persistent problems in EFL writing. Difficulties related to tense usage, article application, sentence structure, and prepositions significantly affect textual clarity and coherence. Vocabulary limitations further restrict learners' ability to communicate sophisticated ideas effectively. Organizational problems, including weak paragraph development and inadequate cohesion, reduce the overall quality and readability of students' texts. Additionally, psychological barriers such as writing anxiety and low confidence negatively influence learners' motivation and willingness to engage in writing activities.

#### References:

1. Principles of Language Learning and Teaching. (2007). Pearson Education.
2. Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy. (2001). Pearson Education.
3. Second Language Writing. (2003). Cambridge University Press.
4. Language Teaching Methodology. (1991). Prentice Hall.
5. Teaching ESL/EFL Reading and Writing & Newton, J. (2009). Routledge.
6. Cohesion in English & Hasan, R. (1976). Longman.
7. Ferris, D. (2002). Treatment of Error in Second Language Student Writing. University of Michigan Press.
8. Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (2002). Methodology in Language Teaching: An Anthology of Current Practice. Cambridge University Press.
9. Harmer, J. (2004). How to Teach Writing. Pearson Education.
10. Hyland, K. (2019). Second Language Writing. Cambridge University Press.
11. Daly, J. A., & Miller, M. D. (1975). The empirical development of an instrument to measure writing apprehension. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 9(3), 242–249.
12. Nation, P. (2001). Learning Vocabulary in Another Language. Cambridge University Press.
13. Byrne, D. (1998). Teaching Writing Skills. Longman.
14. Tribble, C. (1996). Writing. Oxford University Press.
15. Raimes, A. (1983). Techniques in Teaching Writing. Oxford University Press.