

Reading-Based Writing Model: A Blended Learning Alternative

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Abstract

Writing is often regarded as a difficult skill to acquire by majority of EFL learners. Teaching writing is also unquestionably challenging. It is argued that an essential effort to assist learners is having them explore information to write through reading topic and genre-related sources extensively. This article seeks to explain the result of a study employing R&D method to develop a Reading-Based Model to teach academic writing. It will report the results of the needs analysis briefly and then explain the model itself. The data about the students' needs of writing according to the students and the writing lecturers were collected through questionnaire and interview. The results of needs analysis and relevant literature confirmed that reading prior and during writing is elemental. The syntax of the model was developed on the basis of literature dealing with the principles of reading-writing relations and the Genre-based Approach. It consists of 4 main stages. Some activities within each stage can be carried out online. The model has gone through a validation process by two experts (two experienced lecturers teaching writing skills). The model was considered valid by the experts; a few recommendations were concerned with additional activities. An experiment to test the effectiveness and the practicality of the model has been carried, yet the result cannot be reported here since the data are still in the process of analysis.

Keywords: *reading, writing, needs, syntax of model*

INTRODUCTION

Many researches show that writing in English is a difficult skill to acquire by the second or foreign language learners (Dai, 2012; Lee, 2005; Pinsarn, 2013; Zoghipour, 2016). They often face problems in organizing ideas, choosing appropriate diction, using correct grammar, (e.g. Al-Khasawneh, 2010; Bakeer, 2018; Muamarah et al., 2020; Rozimela and Wahyuni, 2019). Studies revealing features of non-native speakers' writings (see Hinkel, 2002) also reflect students' problems in English writing. To mention some, students faced problems of logical organization and rhetorical reasoning (Soter, 1988), in maintaining rhetorical topic and developing ideational cohesion (Kaplan, 1983), tendency to be indirect (e.g. Hinkel 1995; Hinkel 1997), and mistakes and errors in lexicogrammatical features (Reid, 1990). For example, a study conducted by Dwivedi and Chakravarthy (2015), the students lacked the knowledge of the language. Learners may be able to produce grammatically correct sentences but do not

sound English due to mother tongue interference. It is understood a writer will not be able to write if s/he has nothing to say.

To help learners to cope with the problems, teachers usually apply various available approaches, models, and strategies to teach writing. There are three popular approaches- product-based, process-based, and genre-based approaches. The Genre-Based Approach is a current approach that is concerned with all aspects of writing (see for example Bruce, 2008). This approach has a framework through which students are scaffolded to write in various genres with their specific purposes, generic structure, and lexicogrammar features in form a well- structured stage of presentation (Challagan and Rothery, 1988; Christie, 1997; Johns, 2002; Paltridge, 2002). To realize the framework the teachers are required to select suitable techniques or strategies.

In terms of idea development, teachers usually use some techniques like brainstorming, clustering, semantic mapping, and idea sharing in small group discussion. These techniques are actually useful. In spite of that, the ideas are merely explored from the students' experiences, and sometimes added by with the teacher. Probably, this one of a reason why their ideas are limited, they weak arguments, lack of supporting data or evidence, and lack of elaboration. Apparently, this practice is also responsible for students' limited variations and use of vocabulary and technical terms. Their sentence patterns and style tend to be in spoken language style.

To date, a model how to scaffold EFL students to have rich or at least sufficient information to write and to have wide range of vocabulary is lacking. Reading related-topic is assumed to help learners improve their aforementioned writing problems. This is supported by Extensive Reading Hypothesis (Grabe, 2003). It is stated that argued extensive reading will lead to better writing. In the same vein, Bruce (2008) argues that learners are well prepared for what they are going to write, writing will be successful and meaningful.

Using R & D method, this study aims to develop a model to teach writing where reading activity takes a relatively bigger part than the available models. It is named 'Reading-Based Model to Teach Writing'. This article will explain the model that is preceded by a brief report on the result of needs analysis.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Challenges of Learning and Teaching EFL Writing

Writing is inevitably important. For English language learners, writing is not merely a way to express their thoughts and feelings, but it is a way to practice communicating in the target language they learn appropriately and accurately. Shouman (2002:1) states that "Writing gives an opportunity to the students to be adventurous with the language, to take risk and to go further of what is learned to talk about". Usually English learners learn about the language in separate subjects or course units (e.g. the curriculum of the English Department of UNP) in which they learn almost aspects of English grammar. This declarative knowledge will be transferred into the procedural one if learners are provided with opportunities to use it in communication; writing is one of the ways. This, of course, does not necessary mean that one has to acquire the declarative knowledge completely before s/he transfers into the procedural one. There is always interplay between them in the process of learning. Then, in order to be able to write appropriately based on a given context learners will use knowledge they have about how a certain kind of text (genre) of its own purpose is structured. This knowledge is most likely obtained inherently through reading activities and learned explicitly through text analysis in writing subjects. Learners are also introduced to writing strategies and ways of improving their writing quality.

In spite of such supporting knowledge how to write and provision of opportunities to practice, many EFL learners still find it difficult to produce a piece of well-accepted academic writing. As stated in the previous part, research shows that learners' problems vary- from sentence grammar up to discourse problems. For instance, even though the students had been able to write a text of a genre in terms of the generic structure, they still had various problems dealing with language use and expression (Rozimela, 2014). This indicates that writing is exceptionally challenging because it is a complex activity which employs multitudes of skills and requires some prerequisite knowledge (Richards and Renandya, 2002).

Akin to EFL writing, teaching it is also challenging. Teachers often face difficulties in scaffolding their students to develop and organize ideas and use accurate and appropriate language choices. They also have difficulties in helping students overcome

non-language problems such as low motivation, negative attitude, and low confidence. Efforts to help students are surely never-ending.

Numerous research employing a variety of methods in diverse contexts (see e.g. Bruce, 2008; Hinkel, 2002) has been conducted by writing researchers and English educators whose results provide insights for the improvement of teaching and learning writing. Based on the research results, to help learners to overcome their difficulties in writing, there are at least three aspects teachers have to take into account in their instruction. Firstly, they have to raise learners' genre awareness. Genres should be explicitly taught (Bhatia, 1993; Flowerdew, 2000; Paltridge, 2001) and learned (Christie, 1999). Since the structure of a certain text type is different from context to context, students need to be made aware of it and be introduced explicitly to it, so that they can "participate effectively in target situations" (Hyland, 2003, 22). Christie (1999) emphasizes the importance of teachers' awareness about their teaching practices and their students' learning, so that they can direct and guide their students in learning to write. Explicit teaching enables students to understand and later produce text types in appropriate linguistic features and rhetorical structure. Martin (1999) argues that learning genre conventions does not restrict children's agency and voice; rather it liberates children by developing their power to engage in, contribute to, and critique a discipline (cited in Wollman-Bonilla, 2000). Some studies (e.g. Carter, Ferzli and Wiebe, 2004; Henry & Roseberry, 1998) focusing on the implementation of a genre-based approach suggests that genres can be both explicitly and effectively taught. By investigating the significant features of a genre that include its purpose, structure, and language features, the students are made aware of the fact that learning to write involves recognizing how writing has traditionally, generically, conventionally, and playfully functioned (Gilbert, 1990).

Secondly, as writing has to do with using language appropriately and accurately, incorporating grammar instruction is essential. The context built in the writing tasks facilitates grammar learning meaningfully. The teachers have to design their writing instruction as such that the students can exercise their tacit grammar knowledge in a real purposeful communication. In relation to this, Frodesen and Holten (2003: 144) state: "in recent years, L2 acquisition researchers stressed the need for focus on form, not in the 'old' or traditional sense of decontextualized lessons on grammar, but as a

component of instruction that starts with a focus on." Drawing on research dealing with the place of grammar in an individual' writing process, they suggest to attend to language issues consistently throughout the drafting process (p.145).

Next, writing instruction needs to incorporate strategies aiming at helping students generate ideas. Majority of EFL learners experience stumbling block when they start writing and elaborate their ideas which results in low writing quality. In this case, reading plays an important role. The following section explores the function of reading for writing.

READING FOR WRITING

Approaches to teaching academic writing have been changed over the last few decades. Basically the approaches are grouped into 'product-based', 'process', and genre-based approaches. The approaches give varying attention to building topic-related knowledge to help learners generate and elaborate their ideas. The Genre-Based Approach has a special space for this purpose which is carried out at the first stage (building knowledge of the field). The techniques are left to the teachers' decision. It is argued that reading topic-related sources before and during writing is useful for students to generate important information for their writing and as a source for enhancing their discourse and linguistic competences.

A great number of studies on relations between reading and writing have appeared for more than three decades. Grabe (2003) states that the research involves the Interdependence Hypothesis, the Language Threshold Hypothesis, and Extensive Reading Hypothesis. The latter continues to generate interesting research. According to Grabe (2003:248), "considerable extensive reading, over time, will lead to better writing abilities". Extensive reading makes it possible for the students to have better vocabulary knowledge, better syntactic knowledge, semantic memory, better metalinguistic awareness, and of course broader knowledge of the world (Stavonich et al. 1996 and Warner and Stavonich, 1996 cited in Grabe, 2003).

Reading helps students carry out writing tasks because they can learn information from texts they read. For academic writing especially, students are required to support their ideas and their arguments with data which are generally gained from written sources. They may summarize information from a source text, synthesize information from some two more sources, quote scholars' opinions, and refer to previous research

findings. A long piece of academic writing such as article and thesis report inevitably needs lots of reading (see e.g., Bruce, 2008; Kruse, 2003; Nation, 2009).

Next, through reading students develop their discourse competence. They learn how the writer communicates his ideas to the readers (how he explains his point, how he argues, how he chooses the language appropriately (Sheng, 2000). This process can raise the students' awareness about genre. Scholars argue that genre knowledge is important for second and foreign language learners (cited in Paltridge, 2002) because "different genres are different ways of using language to achieve different culturally established tasks" (Eggins and Martin in Bruce, 2008:16). Without having knowledge how a discourse community constructs a text of a certain genre, second language learners may have difficulty to understand the text (Francis and Hallam, 2000), and of course to produce it. Johns (2008) also emphasizes that students need to have to learn the characteristics of a certain text type (genre) to help them interpret and produce that genre. Frodesen and Holten (2003) state that readings serve as a source of authentic and interesting examples of features of English grammar, examples that can make students sensitive to the choices that writers make to convey meaning. For instance, through reading the students can learn how a writer uses the generic markers (self-referential or interreferential) to convey his intention (Coutinho and Miranda, 2009). They also learn about tone and style of writing.

For the benefits of reading for writing, scholars (e.g. Bruce, 2008; Nation, 2009; Grabe, 2003) suggest teachers to encourage students to read related text sources and to integrate reading into the teaching of writing. Based on the result his research, Johns (1993) contends that teaching advanced students to write from text resources is essential for academic success. Research by Leki and Carson reveals that second language students "need more practice with tasks that involve reader-responsible writing- that is, writing from texts in which the content is considered an important part of evaluation" (in Grabe, 2003: 251). In short, writing incorporates and interpolates the results of reading (Mason and Washington cited in Rozimela, 2004).

Derived from discussions and research on reading-writing relations, Grabe (2003) recommends some general guidelines, a few related to the use of reading. They include task analyses, rhetorical stances, data collection and interpretation, and using summary or ideas from reading texts. Nation (2009) suggests some principles of teaching writing

including meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, language-focused learning, and fluency development. Almost all principles require reading resources. To get effective results, Grabe (2003) suggests teachers to ensure: 1) how much and which information students should take, 2) how the information taken will fit with task and writer goals, 3) how accurately the information should be presented when going from text source to students writing, and 4) what formal mechanism should be used for transforming or using the textual information

METHODS

This study employed Research and Development method using ADDIE model. At the initial stage, the students' needs of academic writing were carried out by requiring 152 students who had taken Essay Writing class to fill in a questionnaire. It consisted of 70 statements that were developed based on indicators of academic writing and strategies of learning writing skill. A questionnaire of a five point Likert scale in form of attitude scale was distributed to the students to fill. In addition, four writing lecturers were interviewed to find out their view about the students' needs of academic writing and how writing should be learned. The data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed by counting the total score of each statement and each group of attitude scale. The result of the calculation indicated the tendency of the students' needs of each indicator. The lecturers' answers through the interview were analyzed qualitatively by looking at the themes emerged or emphasized by the lecturers and classifying the answers in order to see the trends. The students' answers were compared with the lecturers' to determine the students' needs. In order to get a more comprehensive answer about needs of academic writing in English, we did document analysis including current trend in teaching writing written in some books, research findings dealing with teaching and learning writing in English, and syllabus of Academic Writing course.

The result of the needs analysis was taken into account in developing the hypothetical model that had been developed on the basis of teaching and learning theories, preliminary research, and related-previous research findings. The model then was validated by two experienced writing lectures using a predetermined validation guideline. Then, a focus group discussion between the researchers and the writing lecturers was conducted to ensure that the model was valid and thus worth trying out.

RESULT

The results reported in this article focuses on the model itself. The explanation will cover the syntax of the refined model and some alternative activities for each step. As mentioned earlier, an account of the result of needs analysis will also be presented briefly.

THE RESULT OF NEEDS ANALYSIS

The result of needs analysis shows that the students and the lecturers had agreement at many points in what had to be learned. They, however, had different opinions at a couple of points in how writing should be learned and taught. First, all students and lecturers agreed that reading for writing was important. The students believed that reading helped them generate ideas about what to write. The lecturers viewed that reading did not only help the students in terms of ideas, but also texts structure and language use. Second, both students and the lecturers had the same opinion about a need to learn the generic structure and the language features of a certain genre. They also thought that grammar and vocabulary had to be learned somehow when they learned writing. The students and the lecturers as well agreed that feedback was essential for the students' writing improvement.

However, the students and the lecturers had conflicting ideas about how generic structure, the language features had to be learned, and how feedback should be given. Most of the students wanted the lecturers to explain the generic structure of a genre before they practiced writing. However, the lecturers believed that encouraging the students to figure out the structure of a text could boost their analytical and critical thinking, and thus they would be able to understand better and retain the information in their long term memory. The second difference was concerned with grammar features of a text and new vocabulary learning. The students preferred explicit teaching through which the lecturers explained them and provided examples, while the lecturers believed that contextual- integrated teaching was better to make the students understand the language features in focus. The last disagreement dealt with feedback provision. Most of the students preferred direct corrections given to the wrong or inaccurate content and language use. The lecturers, in contrast, observed that indirect corrections and comments enabled students to learn better- finding out why something was wrong and using relevant knowledge and even searching for more information to improve their writing.

In conclusion, the similar and different opinions between the students and the lecturers had acceptable reasons. Because of that, they were taken as input to refine the model. For the dissimilarities, the combination was used.

THE SYNTAX OF THE MODEL

The syntax of the model consists of four main stages. Each stage has some activities. These activities may be changed by a lecturer in accordance with the context and situation. The most important to bear is that the activities realize the objectives of the stages.

Table 1. Syntax of Reading-Based Writing Model

No	Stages	Objective(s)	Activities
1	Reading for Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to facilitate the students with ideas/information - to enrich the students' vocabulary - to provide examples how language is used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reading sources (genre-free) about or related the topic that has been decided or negotiated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * This is done individually - Making a note about ideas, new vocabulary, technical terms, and common academic generic terms - Carrying out a class discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * This can be done online using available platforms/applications
2	Building Knowledge of Genre	to introduce the generic structure and the dominant language features of a genre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analyzing a text model of a genre (the purpose, the generic structure, and the dominant language features) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * This should be done offline - Doing exercises concerning generic structure and the language features raising awareness - Having discussion on the result of the exercises <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *This can be done online or offline
3	Writing	- To provide opportunity for the students practice writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Writing in group - Writing conference - Writing individually <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Looking at relevant reading sources is strongly suggested to compare/ensure the students learn from the readings
4	Reviewing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To get feedback - To improve the draft - To produce the final product 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Self- review - Peer review - Feedback from the lecturer - Revision and Edition

Stage 1

The first stage is mainly intended to build the students' content knowledge about the topic to be developed. For that purpose, the students are required to read as much as possible. For example, the topic to be developed is 'covid-19 pandemic'. The students

can search for the reading materials in any genres about the topic; they may read article journals, newspapers, and books. The lecturer gives at least one example as a trigger. After reading the sources, they have to make a note consisting of ideas/information, new vocabulary, and technical terms, expressions that the students think important. The lecturer may also give prompting questions to direct to the ideas that may be used in their writing later. Through these activities it is expected that the students have information/ideas to write. Furthermore, the students learn how to convey ideas in a written language including sentence patterns and vocabulary choices, tone, and also style. Then, a class discussion is carried out in order for the students exchange information each other, and thus enrich their ideas. In this class discussion, the lecturer should guide the students in doing this activity. This may be done offline or online.

Stage 2

At this stage the students are introduced to a certain genre; the genre that they will write. Yet, the topic has to be different from the topic discussed at the first stage. As a genre has its own social function, generic structure, and language features, raising students' awareness is necessary. In the Genre-Based Approach, the students have to be exposed to the features of genre explicitly. This is in line with the students' expectation in the needs analysis phase of this study. Thus, at the lecturer is suggested to do a text analysis. The lecturer shows a text model of the concerning genre. The lecturer guides the students to find out the purpose of the genre in social life, the structure of the text, and the dominant language features. It is important to begin this activity with reading comprehension. Besides enriching the students' ideas and their knowledge about written language, reading comprehension will make the discussion about the features of genre can be done at ease.

Exercises dealing with the features of the genre are essential to ensure that the students understand them well. For the generic structure, exercises like analyzing another text by determining the components of the structure, rearranging scrambled paragraphs of a text, identifying right and wrong components in a text may be given. Then, for the dominant language features, the students may be required to highlight the dominant grammar aspects such as tenses or material processes, some technical terms, editing a text containing some language problems, using new vocabulary in separate

sentences, and many other contextual language exercises. It is important to note that for any kind of exercise, reinforcement has to be given.

Stage 3

The students practice writing about the topic whose ideas have been generated through reading at the first stage. The genre of the text is the one discussed at the second stage. It is better to start this activity in form of small group discussion and collaborative writing. Group collaborative writing can be preceded by teacher modeling. This can be done by showing the students how to develop a paragraph and involving them to give their ideas and propose their sentences, or even vocabulary. In group writing, the students will learn from each other about 'what' to write and 'how' to write. As a facilitator, the lecturer scaffolds the groups by monitoring their work and offering necessary help. In the process of writing, the students have to be reminded of their reading sources. They should be encouraged to compare their writing with the sources, to pick some relevant terms, to 'imitate' how the professional writers convey their ideas.

The results of collaborative writing should be presented in class conference so that the students will learn more from their friends' writing and for the writers to get feedback from their peers and lecturer. This strategy will enhance their awareness about the existence of audience. In order to be effective, a guideline concerning the items to be commented is given to the students. When they listen to and learn to look at their peers' writing, they are in reader position. Through this experience the students learn how to improve their own writing.

Then, the students are required to produce their writing individually. They may do this at home. The topic can be negotiated with the students or determined by the lecturer. As how they do at stage 1, they are required to search for and read some relevant sources. To make sure the students do this activity, ask them to have a note from their reading about ideas, terms, and vocabulary they may use in their writing.

Stage 4

At this stage the students get opportunity to revise and edit their writing. This is done by first asking the students to assess their own writing and their peers'. A guideline and explanation about the guideline has to be given by the lecturer prior to the self and peer-correction. This can be done through online. The guideline can be sent through various

available LMS such as Google classroom or available e-learning platform of the university. The lecturer can also develop an application especially for this purpose. Then, the lecturer presents a text of the same topic and genre selected from the texts available online or from the printed ones or a text written by the lecturer herself. The students are required to compare their writing with it. This is intended to give them a final thought before they revise their writing. Thus, the students have at least three kinds of input including the result of self-correction, peer correction, and the text. Feedback for the next writing practice has to be given to the individual's writing. Again, this can be done online.

DISCUSSION

Needs analysis conducted prior the development of the proposed model revealed that the students and the lecturers perceived that reading for writing is important. Apparently the students understood the benefits of reading to help them develop their writing. It also may mean that they were aware of their problems about the content or limited ideas of their writing. Thus, the proposed model is confirmed by the result of needs analysis.

Based on a review of related literature and the result of needs analysis, it is viewed that reading activities should be done not only prior to or at pre-writing stage, but also during writing, or even at post writing. At the initial stage, the primary function of reading is to prepare students with what they are going to write. Nation (2009) calls this 'meaning-focused input'. Instructing the students to read extensively various texts about the topic to be developed will benefit the students in overcoming the problem namely writer's block- the condition of being unable to think of what to write or how to proceed with writing. The reading sources may, for example, give inspiration about what to write, data to strengthen arguments, examples for topic elaboration, or even clarify their existing thoughts and experiences. As suggested by Grabe (2003), students should be given a guideline about what to read, how much they have to read, and what they are expected to do from their reading. Without such guidance, the result may be trivial. For this reason, this proposed model adopts this principle; extensive reading is carried prior to writing (the first stage of the model syntax).

Students' genre awareness is elemental. There are two different views about this issue. The first, some state explicit teaching is not necessary. According to scholars

having this view, genres are learned through exposure. Freedman argues that students learn genres through "situated immersion and textual input without any explicit instruction"(in Devitt, 2004: 192). Even so, Freedman and Medway (1994) critical awareness of a genre is important and acquisition of a genre must be preceded by that awareness. I would argue that to empower foreign language learners with limited exposure and limited English ability, explicit teaching to raise students' genre awareness is necessary. The wheel model proposed by Martin that moves students from analyzing models of a genre, to working collaboratively to produce a text, and writing a text individually in that genre(Cope and Kalanzis, 1993) is suitable for EFL learners.As stated by Devitt (2004:198), "the goals of teaching genre awareness are for the students to understand the intricate connections between contexts and forms, to perceive potential ideological effects of genres, and to discern both constraints and choices that genres make possible". I go with Devitt (2004) stating that teaching genre awareness does not mean that teachers have to use lecture method or presentational teaching. Thus, for the model I propose, a stage is especially give allocated for teaching genre awareness, yet the techniques are left to the teacher.

Next, the students get advantages of writing collaboratively before they write individually.Through collaboration, students shared the information from their readings and their personal experiences. Collaborative writing helps student generate ideas (Anggraini et al. 2020; Dobao, 2012; Kesler et al., 2012; Shehadeh, 2011; ShinWanTeow, 2014) improve students' vocabulary and motivation (Dobao & Blum, 2013; Shehadeh, 2011) and Khodabakhshzadeh & Samadi (2017), their critical thinking (Ghufron & Hawa, 2015; Jalili & Shahrokhi, 2017; Shehadeh, 2011).Working in a small group, students do not only share ideas, but also clarify their own thoughts, strengthen their arguments, enhance their communication skill, and develop non-linguistic abilities such as critical thinking and creativity. The teacher is responsible to scaffold the students by monitoring the groups and giving necessary help if needed. The slow learners should be motivated to learn from the quick ones, and vice versa. The result of the group writing should be brought up to a class conference. The purposes of the writing conference are twofold- getting feedback from peers and raising audience awareness. Then, each student is given an opportunity to write a text of the same genre individually.

The last activity necessary to do by the students is reviewing their writing. The students have to be encouraged to review their own individual writing. Self-review is intended to empower the students to be responsible for their own writing. Through reviewing process they are invited to look at the aspects of writing, identify which they think are not in place, what should be added, or what should be changed, what should be corrected. This process raises their awareness about genre, language, and language use. They read their writing, find out their own mistakes, and revise the mistakes by themselves. Through this process students grow to be mature and independent writer. The teacher's feedback toward the final project draft remains important for the input for the students' future writing.

CONCLUSION

This article has explained the importance of reading for writing purpose. Research shows that reading helps writers in a number of ways. Ideas or information the students obtain from their readings will be useful to help the students in terms of content. In addition to this, the students learn subconsciously how language is used in a written text. In other words, the students' declarative knowledge about language is activated through reading which can enhance their writing skill. Based on this principle, a model of teaching academic writing namely Reading-Based Writing model has been designed and has been explained in this article. The syntax of the model provides a room for students to read before and during the process of writing. The result of an experiment to a limited participants show that the students' writing skill increased both in terms of idea development and language use. The model still needs refinement. It is expected that this model will help teachers/lecturers in guiding their students to write a good piece of academic writing.

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