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Challenges of Academic Writing: An Overview of Academic Writing of Master's Level Students in Nepal

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Abstract:

This study explores the challenges of academic writing of Master's level students when carrying out assignments and writing theses at the Tribhuvan University. The phenomenological research design under the qualitative research approach was adopted for this study. Six students in the fourth semester of the Master of Education in English were selected through a judgmental non-random sampling procedure. An in-depth interview was implemented as a research instrument to elicit data from the respondents who have been writing these at Tribhuvan University. An interpretive research paradigm was executed to analyze and interpret the data. The findings show that feedback and comments were inadequately provided to the students; they did not have critical reading skills, incorporation of the latest APA, MLA, and Chicago writing manuals in the curriculum, and lack of awareness of the consequences of unacademic writing. Academic writing skills are the backbone of Master's level students in carrying out assignments and theses; therefore, academic writing should be focused on at the beginning of the Master's level.

Keywords: thesis writing, feedback, academic writing, pre-service teachers.

学术写作的挑战：尼泊尔硕士生学术写作概述

摘要：

本研究探讨了特里布万大学硕士水平学生在完成作业和撰写论文时面临的学术写作挑战。本研究采用定性研究方法下的现象学研究设计。英语教育硕士第四学期的六名学生是通过判断性非随机抽样程序选出的。我们采用深度访谈作为研究工具，从特里布万大学撰写这些文章的受访者那里获取数据。执行解释性研究范式来分析和解释数据。调查结果表明，没有向学生提供充分的反馈和评论；他们没有批判性的阅读技巧，没有将最新的美国心理学协会、美国临床研究协会和芝加哥写作手册纳入课程，也缺乏对非学术写作后果的认识。学术写作能力是硕士水平学生完成作业和论文的支柱；因此，学术写作应该在硕士阶段开始时重

点关注。

关键词：论文写作、反馈、学术写作、职前教师。

1. Introduction

Academic writing is a logical-scientific mode based on empirical truth and the use of referential language (Bruner, 1986). The report of any scientific research is written explicitly in the academic form required for writing project work, case studies, report writings, assignments, articles, dissertations, and examination papers. It is regarded as a social practice in which academic interactions are held between the writer and members of the academic community (Rahimivand & Kuhi, 2014). Writing is an important and influential creative skill in English teaching. It plays a vital role in communicating information and ideas beyond space and time. It is one of the basic tools that consents to human knowledge to transcend time and space. The significance of writing is undeniable in every walk of life. The importance of writing in the EFL domain plays a vital role in building the careers of EFL learners at home and abroad (Fazilatfar et al., 2018).

Writing requires certain strategies such as changing the order of words, using different grammatical structures, changing from a clause to a phrase or vice versa, changing from direct speech to indirect speech or vice versa, changing from active voice to passive voice or vice versa, and changing word forms and word class/part of speech to make it sound more academic (Bailey, 2006; Richard & Schmidt, 2010). Academic writers must summarize or paraphrase ideas they borrow from other authors with due acknowledgment. For paraphrasing, the 5Cs techniques viz., comprehend, change, combine, check, and cite; are suggested (Leki, 2010; Bailey, 2006).

University graduates require adequate academic writing skills. At Tribhuvan University (TU), the submission of a thesis is a mandatory requirement for completing a Master's degree. Students pursuing a Master of Education (MEd) in English Education who are also pre-service teachers are expected to develop and improve academic writing skills from the beginning of the first semester. Their strong grasp of these skills ensures a commendable output in their thesis, which they wrote in the fourth semester. Undergraduate students should master orthography, mechanics, grammar, academic vocabulary, proper use of prepositions and articles, and cohesive and coherent language in constructing academic discourse for thesis writing (Jusun & Yunus, 2018; Ramasamy & Aziz, 2018). A high-level proficiency in academic writing will only help them avoid patch writing regarded as unacademic writing in which L2 writers adopt strategies of substitution, deletion, or rearrangements of grammatical structures from the source texts. This problem is an output of superficial paraphrasing that lacks linguistic competence in English to rephrase the

source text as the backdrop. There should be an addition of new clauses, phrases, and vocabulary items to convey additional information that is not expressed in the original text (Keck, 2010).

Thesis writing is an important part of the teacher education program at TU. It is a mandatory part of the coursework prescribed in the fourth semester of MEd in English education, with six credits weighted out of 69 credits in the curriculum of MEd in English at TU. This is mostly the first attempt they make at academic writing; therefore, thesis writing is an arduous task for students for reasons such as inexperience (Li et al., 2017), lack of adequate exposure, and limited understanding of thesis requirements (Bitchener, et al., 2010). In this regard, undergraduate students generally perceive that the task of thesis writing equals or outweighs the energy that they spend during their entire studies (Sadeghi & Khajepasha, 2015). Thesis writing is generally perceived as a complicated academic task that is more challenging to perform than the other subjects in medicine. The undergraduate students of MEd are the prospective English teachers of universities/colleges and schools and the prospective education officers in government offices. The quality of the thesis that they submit will ensure the quality of education in the future. Therefore, academic writing is an essential aspect for undergraduate students in their academic careers (Paudel, 2022). They are expected to maintain the clarity, integrity, accuracy, appropriate preciseness, and conciseness of their academic writing while performing thesis writing. The accuracy and appropriate of sentence structures, vocabularies, punctuation marks, prepositions, articles, and conjunctions are basic knowledge for undergraduate students in thesis writing (Al Tamimi, 2018).

Moreover, in the academic careers of undergraduate students, writing is a crucial skill. In this regard, Teng and Wang (2022) argue that "academic is an essential skill for tertiary-level students' learning English as a foreign language" (p. 3). Having mastery over academic writing, they can interact with the academic community in their preferred academic domains. After acquiring knowledge and skills in academic writing, undergraduate students can communicate their ideas while researching any preferred topic to become a part of academic communities (Raimes, 1993).

2. Literature Review

Academic writing refers to precise, concise, and unambiguous writing with coherent and cohesive writing. It is very persuasive and rhetorical in nature with a logical flow of discourse that should be socially acceptable and politically neutral with jargon-free language. An undergraduate student faces various

challenges in his/her academic writing journey. One major hurdle in this way is writing proficiency, which is a challenging skill for second language users (Nunan, 1999). At the research level, academic writing is an essential skill for novice researchers. No academic work could be accomplished without mastery of academic writing. Second language novice researchers are not very competent in academic writing (Fareed, Ashraf & Bilal, 2016). They must study the conventions of academic writing formally in class.

Academic writing must be free from ethical questioning and misconduct. In this regard, plagiarism is the most serious and widely recognized ethical misconduct. Plagiarism refers to the taking of words, images, processes, structures, designs, and ideas of others as one's own in academic writing without offering any credit to the writers of the original text. It is also known as the kidnaping of words, kidnaping of ideas, fraud, and literary and intellectual theft. Furthermore, novice researchers can commit plagiarism unconsciously from flashbacks of their ideas of previous work, either without acknowledging their work or borrowing ideas from others without giving credit to the writers. This type of intellectual unethical theft is called cryptomnesia or unconscious plagiarism (Brown & Murphy, 1989; Brown & Halliday, 1991; Marsh & Bower, 1993). Even self-plagiarism cannot be entertained in academic writing. Most novice researchers commit plagiarism while performing their assignments and research work academically due to their lack of knowledge of adequate norms and values of academic writing styles and practices. It is very difficult to write in English for non-native speakers of English because they lack knowledge of academic conventions (Suherdi et al., 2020). Thus, this is a very rigorous process that requires the development of an inquisitive writer persona in an individual.

Research requires cognitive engagement, which indicates the investment in deep learning, self-regulation, perceived future relevance of learning thoughtfulness, and willingness to exert necessary efforts (Fredricks et al., 2004; Philip & Duchesne, 2016). Writing is regarded as a mental and cognitive activity in an isolated and solitary context (Gillam & Wooden, 2013). It is cognitively demanding, drawing upon the knowledge, skills, strategies, and abilities of learners to operate using various processes (Huy, 2015). In this regard, Selvaraj and Aziz (2019) argue that writing is a mental process of thinking and concentrating to organize ideas in a logical, creative, and critical manner.

The main causes of plagiarism are limited exposure to writing styles from sources and little instruction in paraphrasing, summarizing, and citation to novice researchers (Bloch, 2012; Keck, 2014; Fazilatfar et al., 2018). Paraphrasing and summarizing are inevitable techniques for avoiding plagiarism in academic writing. Novice researchers are very poor at paraphrasing and summarizing source texts to improve academic writing. They need to develop a range of academic vocabulary,

knowledge of cohesion, and coherence in developing academic writing. Cohesive devices are required for developing academic writing, such as moreover; therefore, thus, nevertheless, however, similarly, etc. to make the discourse more comprehensive.

Paraphrasing is essential in academic writing to avoid plagiarism. Bailey (2006, p. 29) argues that "paraphrasing involves changing a text so that it is quite different from the source while retaining the meaning". Paraphrasing means writing completely in the researchers' own words by changing the grammatical structures and synonyms of each content word without losing the main essence of the source text. Hirvela and Du (2013) claim that paraphrasing does not shorten information from the source; however, the apprentice researcher presents the data in ways other than the source text in the paraphrased text. University students' plagiarism is widespread; therefore, it must be addressed through academic writing (Hu & Sun, 2017). Paraphrasing in academic writing is a "recast of individual sentences, creating a combination of original language and grammatical structures" (p. 88). The main causes that hinder pre-service teachers from selecting relevant and important references are underdeveloped reading comprehension skills, lack of critical thinking about the authors' points of view, and limited content knowledge (Bloch, 2012; Shi, 2008). To develop summarizing skills, both reading and writing components should be focused equally to develop thesis writing (Lin & Maarof, 2013).

Academic writing should have proper use of either of the writing styles consistently, such as the American Psychological Association (APA), Modern Language Association (MLA), Chicago Style, etc.; however, there are usually mismatched writing styles in the theses of master level students. The sources of the information should be cited and referenced appropriately by acknowledging the authors of the source text from whom the ideas are borrowed. Borrowing ideas and facts from the source texts in academic writing through paraphrasing and summarizing is an essential way to reduce plagiarism for EFL pre-service teachers (Pecorari, 2003). Citation and referencing are crucial in academic writing, in which acknowledging others' work and validating authors' knowledge are important. In the same vein, Hyland (2009) argues that critical reading comprehension skills are essential for reducing the degree of plagiarism in academic writing.

Undergraduate students should have outstanding skills in summarizing the required ideas and information from the original text to write a thesis. Until and unless they develop their summarizing skills, it is a very challenging task to write a thesis for them. A summary may be just one or two sentences explaining the main idea of the article. According to Bailey (2006), a summary can range from 1-2% of the original to more than 50%. In this regard, Leki (2010, p. 186) argues that "summaries are always quite a bit shorter than the original texts, perhaps 75% shorter. Sometimes, particularly for a book, the summary is much shorter

than the original, perhaps 99% shorter". Summary should be no longer than one-third of the original text, whereas paraphrase should be longer than the original version. The summary restates only the author's main idea, omitting all the examples and evidence used to support and illustrate the points. A good summary should include the various characteristics (Leki, 2010) as follows:

- Include only the most important points without details;
- Correctly interpret the original;
- Use the summarizer's own words, not those of the original author;
- Write the main idea in your own words, not the supporting details;
- Do not copy all things you may need to use;
- Use a quotation only if it is necessary to highlight the key points.

In this regard, there are also 5Rs techniques for drawing summary in academic writing to reduce acting plagiarism in academic writing, viz. read, reduce, record, review, and rewrite. Developing the critical and creative skills of undergraduate students is essential while performing assignments and thesis writing. Academic writing skills are necessary to identify the main ideas or arguments of the authors in the thesis or dissertation. Academic writing skills play a pivotal role in writing reviews of theoretical and empirical literature while writing theses for a Master's degree. Causes and effects, comparisons, illustrations, figures, and histograms are provided to clarify the argument. Incorporating the main ideas of different relevant writers in the particular research precisely and concisely is necessary through the knowledge and expertise of the researchers in academic writing. The use of colloquial and casual informal language is generally avoided in thesis writing.

In thesis writing, a variety of syntactic structures are used. It avoids the use of slang, jargon, dialect, abbreviations, and acronyms. Contract forms, such as can't, isn't, doesn't, don't, mustn't, etc., are not entertained in academic writing. The main facts, evidence, and information are prioritized in academic writing instead of the subjective feelings of the researchers in thesis writing. Furthermore, academic writing skills can be developed through peer responses (i.e., peer reviews or peer feedback) in the ELT classroom. EFL/ESL learners can share their knowledge of academic writing through oral or written feedback between two or more learners (Rodas & Colombo, 2021). In this regard, Bitchener and Ferris (2012) argue that undergraduate students can identify linguistic errors through peer review so that they can develop critical analysis and reading strategies for others and their writing. The peer feedback activities allow the learners to engage in unrehearsed, low-risk, and exploratory activities, which are less feasible in the classroom (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005).

This article delves into the research question

concerning the challenges of Master's level students in their academic writing.

3. Research Methodology

This section incorporates the research paradigm, research design, participants, and research instrument used in this study.

3.1. Research Paradigm and Design

We adopted interpretivism as a paradigm and phenomenology as the research design to analyze and interpret the data. This emerged in response to the over-dominance of positivism and its weaknesses (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). The ontological standpoint of this paradigm rejects a single verifiable reality that exists independent of our senses. In the same vein, the epistemology of the interpretive paradigm is transactional, subjectivist, and co-created (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Thus, there are multiple realities in society. Phenomenology is a qualitative research approach that explains being and consciousness based on the analysis of observable phenomena (Litchman, 2006). The intentionality of consciousness refers to the search and identification of subjacent and subjective elements of consciousness in this study that surpass the intention of understanding reality from a single point of view (Padilla-Diaz, 2015). Welman and Kruger (1999) assert that phenomenologists are apprehensive about understanding social and psychological phenomena from the viewpoints of participants.

3.2. Participants

We selected six pre-service teachers, i.e., MED fourth-semester students, who engaged in thesis writing using purposive non-random sampling. We retrieved the necessary data, i.e., the lived experiences of the respondents by administering in-depth interviews with them. In doing so, the thematic network analysis technique was adopted to generate global themes from basic and organizing themes by linking them with existing relevant literature. We maintained the confidentiality of the respondents and concealed their identity and location. We assigned them pseudonyms; R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, and R6 for this purpose.

3.3. Research Instruments

We tried our best to manage the respondents' spare time to administer the in-depth interview in a relaxed manner. The interviews were recorded on a cell phone. In addition to the record, we maintained notes of the interview. We did not transcribe the entire interview. Instead, we listened to the recorded version carefully. Subsequently, having listened to the recorded version several times, we transcribed only the remarkable narrations of the interview.

4. Results

The responses were analyzed and interpreted, and

the results are discussed under the following themes:

4.1. Inadequacy of Feedback and Comments in Academic Writing

The researcher should modify each word, phrase, sentence, and syntactic structure without losing the meaning of the source text while paraphrasing and summarizing (Regala & Lopez, 2019). However, novice pre-service teachers do not follow the norms of paraphrasing the source text while citing and referencing in academic writing. In a similar vein, R1 claimed:

“There should be practices for paraphrasing and summarizing with examples in the workshop to avoid plagiarism in academic writing. Most of the researchers did not address the comments and feedback provided by the supervisors in their assignments and theses.”

There is no uniformity regarding the writing styles and formats of theses among the supervisors under the Faculty of Education due to the lack of workshops and refreshment training for the supervisors in each department, college, and central department of Education of the university. In this regard, R2 argued that “the payment of the supervisors is a very nominal and negligible amount which is not compatible with the contribution and hard work of the supervisors”.

Tutorial feedback and comments play a vital role in improving the academic writing of novice researchers. In this regard, one of the respondents R3 argued, “We usually do not get comprehensive adequate feedback and comments from the supervisor while collecting the literature. In addition, the comments and feedback are not given at the right time. Unless we get feedback on how to develop an academic write-up.” Due to the lack of adequate feedback, comments, and exposure from the supervisors regarding the methods of internal citation from the source text and referencing in time, the pre-service teachers start to do falsification, fabrication, and plagiarism, thereby having poor academic write-up (Neupane Bastola, 2022). In this regard, R4 asserted “the tutors do not give any constructive feedback and written feedback regarding how to make the writing as cohesive and coherent as possible.” The main cause of poor academic writing is the lack of comments and feedback provided by the supervisors in the assignment.

Appropriate feedback and comments are essential for novice pre-service teachers at the beginning of the semester. Specifically, proper written feedback on academic writing is inevitable to improve students’ academic writing. In this regard, R5 stated:

“It would be very comprehensive if the subject teacher provided us with written feedback underlying the falsified, fabricated, and plagiarized portions of the write-up. Sometimes, feedback is full of confusion, which makes us commit further errors. We need a demonstration of paraphrasing and summarizing provided by the tutors.”

The novice researchers have committed falsification, fabrication, and plagiarism because they were unaware of the consequences of plagiarism, falsification, and

fabrication in the academic write-up.

4.2. Necessity to Develop Critical Reading Skills

There is a lack of reading culture among the students of Master’s degrees due to their excessive attachment to online public platforms, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Viber, Instagram, and YouTube. The students lack passion and diligence in reading the prescribed and referenced reading materials, which are crucial to developing their writing skills. In this regard, R2 argued that “reading and writing skills are complementary to each other to develop academic write-up.” In this regard, R6 argued, “I always depend on the slides of subject teachers; however, I have not bought any prescribed books. I sometimes depend on guidebooks and bazaar reading tablets.” There is an unavailability of prescribed and referenced books for students in the library of each department, college, and central library of the university. More importantly, pre-service teachers are very poor in critical reading skills. Unless students develop critical reading skills, they cannot develop their academic writing skills. Academic writing skills are inevitable for Master’s degree students for their future academic careers.

Pre-service teachers cannot paraphrase the source text in their own words unless they develop critical reading skills. In this regard, R6 asserted, “I do not read prescribed course books or referenced books. However, I rely on Google and Google Scholar instead of reading the printed journal of research and referenced reading materials.” The main objective of critical comprehensive reading skills is to discover and evaluate what is beyond the text using in-depth thinking. In a similar vein, R2 stated, “The tutors do not ask us to read the prescribed text critically. Instead, they advise us to get good grades at any cost. We were not oriented to develop critical reading skills in the department.” Reading and writing skills complement each other. Without developing critical reading skills, it is impossible to enhance academic writing. Novice researchers should read recent articles published in esteemed indexed Scopus journals to develop their academic writing skills. They should be able to cite the sources of information in the internal text and the references with an adequate writing style.

4.3. Lack of Exposure to Academic Writing

The academic writing of pre-service teachers cannot be developed only through the teaching of theoretical input in the class. There should be exposure to academic writing through the presentation of empirical research and workshops by experts. In this respect, R1 argued:

“There should be exposure to the research work of faculty members, foreign ELT researchers, and students in the department in which all students from the first to fourth semesters can be asked to participate in the presentation mandatorily. However, the practice of such exposure is lacking in the department. The beginners are novices in academic writing.”

The Head of the Department of English Education should manage the exposure of research reports from home and abroad to the students and faculty members at each college. In this regard, R6, stated, "to better support master's thesis, in avoiding plagiarism, the university could manage the collaboration and interactive programs through a physical and online platform to provide useful guidelines for avoiding plagiarism." The student teachers who were supported to conduct a study by the University Grants Commission (UGC) are to be asked to disseminate their reports to the faculty members and students in the department regularly. In this regard, R3 asserted, "The culture of imparting the research report either by faculty members or students in the department openly helps them to avoid plagiarism in academic writing." The trends of running workshops and symposiums in developing academic writing by the Department of English Education are inevitable for novice researchers.

There is a lack of learning materials for students to develop their academic writing skills. In this context, R2 stated, "the Department of English Education should subscribe to international journals with high impact factor and Scopus Indexed Journal to get profound exposure of academic writing to novice researchers." Investment in education gives a vested interest in the world. More exposure should be given for better results in enhancing the academic writing of students. Thus, exposure to academic writing should be considered. Based on the data provided by the participants, we can infer that the curriculum of the MEd in English should be revisited to update the content and mode of pedagogy to incorporate all of the 21st-century skills so that the graduates of the MEd in English education would be global English teachers rather than local English teachers.

4.4. Inclusion of APA and MLA Manuals in the Curriculum

To develop the academic writing of the pre-service teachers at the central departments, constituent campuses, and affiliated campuses of TU, the recently published seventh edition of APA and the recently published eighth edition of MLA manuals should be prescribed in the first semester of the MEd in English curriculum under the academic writing course. In this context, R4 asserted:

"We are illiterate regarding academic writing; however, our tutors time and again ask us to write assignments following the APA seventh edition. I was awarded very low marks in one of my subjects in the second semester because I could not get B+ aggregately."

The priority is to make pre-service teachers aware, competent, and confident in their writing styles. Moreover, the MLA writing style should be prescribed in the curriculum of the Master's degree of English education to make prospective teachers more sensitive and aware academically. In this regard, R5 argued,

"If the APA manual is prescribed in the English syllabus, we can learn and internalize all the components of academic writing simultaneously while writing assignments. The curriculum designers and concerned authorities should collect the perceptions of all stakeholders while modifying the English Language Teaching (ELT) curriculum of the Master's degree at TU. The university authority should follow a bottom-up approach rather than a top-down approach while revisiting the MEd in English Education curriculum."

All stakeholders, viz. students, guardians, teachers, and experts, are to participate in modifying the curriculum of MEd in English Education; however, the top-to-bottom-up approach has been practiced in the course of developing the curriculum of English Education without the participation of students, teachers, experts, and guardians. There are no practices of participating with stakeholders while developing and modifying the English curriculum. In this regard, R6 claimed, "There is a lack of the culture of involving learners, teachers, and guardians during modifying of syllabuses and curricula of master and bachelor of ELT at TU."

Academic writing courses must be prescribed at the bachelor level in ELT as well. The undergraduates in ELT are also prospective teachers of English at the basic and secondary levels in Nepal.

In a similar vein, R5 claimed, "The curriculum of MEd in English Education is more theoretical than practical. There should be more practical subjects than theoretical ones in the Master's level of English education." In this regard, the concerned authorities of the university should revisit the MEd in English Education curriculum to address the voices of stakeholders to make the English curriculum more universal and specific. One of the respondents, R3, asserted, "The Department of English Education should subscribe to Scopus journals like ELT Journal, TESOL, Modern Journal, System, etc." It is argued that if the Scopus journals are made accessible to pre-service teachers, their academic writing is likely to be developed.

4.5. Lack of Awareness of the Consequences of Unacademic Writing

There are serious consequences of fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism in academic writing. Novice researchers like pre-service teachers should be aware of the consequences of copying and pasting either fabricated, falsified, or plagiarized documents during conducting assignments, articles, and theses. In this regard, R4 argued, "After checking the plagiarism, the university can warn the students and make them aware about the plagiarism, why it is not good in writing, what is the effect of it, and what is the determined punishment regarding it. Then it helps in avoiding plagiarism." In fact, certificates could be canceled if the students were proven guilty of plagiarism. Having proved to be plagiarists, the job of

the plagiarists could be suspended. In this regard, R2 asserted, "TU can check the copy and paste writing of students in their academic writing through authenticated software, which has been conducted and controlled by the Central Library of TU." Strict measures are required for the well-being of students after completion of a particular level. In this context, one of the respondents R3 stated, "I think plagiarism poses a major challenge in students' writing because it can lead to the unintentional way where students unknowingly use others' work without proper citation and students may have difficulty understanding its form and implication." Intellectual theft committed by students when conducting assignments and writing theses brings challenges and difficulty in their careers.

5. Discussion

To develop the academic writing skills of undergraduate students, faculty members must be very professional in their teaching and supervising business. Unless the supervisors are positive and professional in academic writing, the MEd students cannot become competent experts in academic writing. The feedback and comments of the supervisors should be very comprehensive and ICT-friendly so that they can address the feedback and comments adequately. Exposure to academic writing is essential for pre-service teachers to develop their academic writing skills, without which they cannot be qualified in their careers. Therefore, we argue that the manuals of APA, MLA, and Chicago must be prescribed in the first semester of MEd in English.

There should be workshops and other academic programs in physical and virtual modes to share the proper use of the eighth edition of MLA and the seventh edition of APA in academic write-ups, such as assignments and theses writing, at the beginning and end of every semester. Moreover, the Department of English Education should subscribe to the Scopus journals of English language teaching journals with a remarkable impact factor to facilitate the pre-service teachers to develop their academic writings. It is very challenging for non-native speakers of English to enhance their academic writing skills without knowledge of academic conventions (Suherdi et al., 2020). The regular practice of academic writing skills through workshops, conferences, and seminars is essential to enhance the proper use of academic writing while writing assignments and theses. The more exposure to academic writing, the better the pre-service teachers' academic writing skills. Since academic writing is a social practice, there should be interaction and collaboration among members of the academic community (Rahimivand & Kuhl, 2014). In this regard, the main causes of falsification, fabrication, and plagiarism are due to the unawareness of the consequences of violating academic writing (Fazilatfar et al., 2018).

Feedback and comments from the tutors and peers are essential for enhancing their academic writing skills.

It can be inferred that if the pre-service teachers receive adequate feedback and comments incessantly in every assignment time from their tutors and peers, they can develop their academic writing by reducing the degree of fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism. Academic writing skills can be enhanced through conducting workshops and seminars in which undergraduate students can develop academic writing skills through feedback and personal analysis of essays written during the writing process (Kuswari & Dallyono, 2022).

Every subject teacher should provide productive feedback on the assignment of each student constantly. A symbiotic relationship exists between critical reading and academic writing skills. To develop academic writing skills, novice researchers should read as many academic research papers, academic research reports, and recently published academic books as possible. Critical reading comprehension skills are essential to reduce plagiarism in academic writing (Hyland, 2009). Trainee researchers can internalize academic conventions, such as proper use of mechanics and adequate use of cohesion and coherence, in enhancing academic writing.

Paraphrasing involves changing a text in which the researcher writes the main gist in his or her own words without losing the main essence of the source text (Bailey, 2006; Richard & Schmidt, 2010). If novice researchers were exposed to academic research work as much as possible, they could be smart in academic writing skills. The manuals of APA and MLA are to be prescribed in the curriculum of English Education to develop the academic writing styles of the pre-service teachers at the Department of English Education since L2 researchers are not very proficient in academic writing (Fareed, Ashraf & Bilal, 2016). To make their research writing more academic, they will be provided more exposure to research writing by subscribing to the esteemed Scopus Indexed Journals in the Department of English Education.

6. Conclusion

Academic writing is the backbone of the students of English education in Master's degree to carry out assignments and theses to get good grades. Academic writing is an essential attribute for pre-service teachers in their academic careers. Due to the lack of exposure and practice in academic writing by pre-service teachers, they hardly write assignments at the end of each semester and theses academically in the final semester of MEd in English. There was no appropriate and comprehensive feedback on the assignments and theses by the supervisors. The recent manuals of APA, MLA, and Chicago are to be practiced from the first semester of MEd to make them competent in academic writing. Undergraduate students are to be trained in critical reading skills to develop academic writing. Assignments on developing critical reading skills are to be assigned in the first, second, and third semesters to develop writing skills. Moreover, undergraduate pre-service teachers should be made aware of the

consequences of fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism in academic writing.

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Contributions of the Authors

The co-author conducted in-depth interviews with the respondents to collect the required data for this study. He also translated the text from Nepali into English and contributed to the Literature review and refining the write-up.

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