Research Article

Ecuadorian Undergraduate Students' Perceptions of the Challenges Faced When Writing Persuasive Essays

Felix Estrella[1*]

[1]Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral, Guayaquil, Ecuador

[*]**Correspondence to: Felix Estrella, Professor,** Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral, Guayaquil, Ecuador; Email: destrell@espol.edu.ec

Abstract

Objective: This study aimed to identify undergraduate polytechnic students' perceptions of the challenges they face when writing persuasive essays in their English classes.

Methods: This research followed a quantitative design utilizing SPSS V.20 to conduct factor and descriptive analysis to answer the three research questions established. One hundred and thirteen students who enrolled in one of the last English courses taught at the university participated in the study. Data were collected using a researcher-designed five-point Likert-scale survey.

Results: Data were treated with Factor Analysis to determine the challenges students face when writing persuasive essays. Principal component analysis was used for data reduction, and five dimensions were identified, "Introduction", "Body Paragraphs", "Conclusion", "Sentence Structure", and "Communicative Achievement". The top five issues that polytechnic undergraduate students deal with are issues with word order, forgetting to write the call-to-action, not using adequate formality all the time in their sentences, failing to write the claim in the thesis statement, and writing topic sentences that are not related to the thesis statement. Also, the dimension that causes more challenges overall is "Body paragraphs".

Conclusion: This paper contributes to the literature in the following senses. Students recognized that writing their topic sentences usually takes a long time. Also, participants claimed that forgetting to write the call-to-action is a challenge they face when writing their essays. Another issue determined in this paper that contributes to the existing literature regards the poor skills students have in summarizing the essay's contents when they write the conclusion of their papers. The last addition this paper makes to the literature is that "Body Paragraphs" has been established as the factor that learners believe is the hardest for them to cope with when writing a persuasive essay.

Keywords: English as a foreign language, writing challenges, essay writing, Ecuadorian students, quantitative design

1 INTRODUCTION

Effective writing skills are crucial for students to succeed in their academic and professional endeavors[1]. The ability to develop communicative competence in writing plays a significant role in language development and academic achievement across all educational levels[2]. According to Arnó-Macià et al.[3], writing proficiency is essential for meeting academic demands and functioning effectively in professional contexts.

Nonetheless, mastering writing skills in one's first language is no easy task.. Writing in a foreign language, such as English, can be particularly daunting for some learners. Furthermore, according to Ibarra[4], students attest that developing writing skills is one of the most challenging things they must face. This perception arises from the inherent complexity of writing. It requires learners to employ various skills and strategies to produce a successful written piece[5]. Also, writing necessitates the application oflexical, syntactic, and organizational knowledge to convey a good composition.

According to Byrnes[6], students go through a process aimed at achieving mastery in expressing themselves in the target language in writing. However, they must learn some uncommon structures essential for successful written communication. Alharthi[7] explains that writing is a skill that enable students to communicate their thoughts. Moreover, for Myles[8], acquiring writing skills does not come naturally for all learners; neither do they develop them from exposure to the language in their environment. The author argues that this skill is mostly culturally transmitted as a group of formal instructional practices. Therefore, teachers play a crucial role in equipping learners with the necessary skills for organizing their ideas in a way that enables readers to understand their train of thought effortlessly.

Writing appropriately and effectively is considered a critical competence in written communication by many researchers. Nonetheless, students usually encounter difficulties when it comes to writing essays. The literature has provided insights into such issues, including: (1) difficulties in crafting proper thesis statements to guide their writing[9,10]; (2) insufficient use of examples or evidence to support their point of view[11,12]; (3) poor sentence structure leading to unclear writing[13,14]; (4) common writing mistakes in essay organization[15,16].

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Importance of Persuasive Essay Writing Skills

Researchers increasingly acknowledge the importance of learners acquiring practical, persuasive essay writing skills. These skills will help them succeed in their academic and practical communication. In the academic sphere, students can use their essays to feature their critical thinking expertise and engage with complex concepts systematically[9,17]. When students construct well-organized arguments, they delve into comprehensive research, synthesizing diverse information sources and formulating coherent reasoning, thus flourishing their cognitive skills[18,19].

Thinking beyond the academic world, essay writing skills have practical implications. When students are proficient at writing persuasive essays, they become empowered to critically assess their sources' credibility, recognize valid claims, and participate in meaningful discussions. Moreover, when students are proficient at presenting well-reasoned essays, they can reflect a deeper engagement with the subject matter and show comprehensive knowledge of complex issues[13]. Finally, fostering persuasive essay-writing skills is relevant in professional settings where articulating well-structured and evidenced-based arguments is critical for effective communication, collaboration, and problem-solving[20].

2.2 Cognitive Processes Involved in Persuasive Essay Writing

Writing essays is a cognitive task that relies on several cognitive processes. The main one is critical thinking, since the writer must analyze and synthesize information to build persuasive reasoning[10]. According to Riwayatiningsih et al.[21], metacognition monitors and regulates vital thinking. The authors explain that such skills allow students to identify logical fallacies and refine their arguments. Such a process requires students to activate high-order cognitive functions like evaluation, inference, and deduction[22,23].

Although there are several cognitive processes involved when students are writing their persuasive essays, this paper only examines three of them: argument construction and rhetorical strategy, thesis formation and organization, and clarity and persuasive speech. These three processes have been chosen as they directly relate to the mechanisms students must develop when writing persuasive essays.

2.2.1 Argument Construction and Rhetorical Strategy

Students must construct a compelling argument to build a successful persuasive essay. Attention to the skills to persuade a reader to accept the writer's ideas through the written word has been part of the literature in recent years[24-27]. Most of the papers on the subject focus on the argumentative elements Toulmin proposed[28-30]. This argumentation model involves supporting claims and considering alternate viewpoints. Toulmin's model has been used to assess learners' ability to produce coherent arguments and to identify differences in their arguments, for which students must analyze their essay question, gather evidence, and present it strategically[31]. Furthermore, the construction of arguments concerns using rhetorical devices such as ethos, pathos, and

logos and utilizing persuasive language to influence the reader's logic[1]. According to several authors, ethos, logos, and pathos are persuasion strategies. More specifically, logos builds logical arguments by appealing to the audience's reason. Meanwhile, by appealing to the speaker's status or authority, ethos increases the likelihood that the audience will trust them. Finally, pathos evokes strong feelings in the viewer, such as anger or sympathy[32-35].

2.2.2 Thesis Formation and Organization

In academic writing, the complexities of thesis development and organizational structuring are key components that majorly impact the persuasive discourse's efficacy[11,15,16]. Scholars have pointed out the importance of the thesis statement as it serves as the central point for the compelling argument. Formulating the thesis statement requires a broad understanding of the subject matter and a sound choice of language used to demonstrate the persuasive intent.

Furthermore, the organization of the essay structure is fundamental to effective academic writing. It involves the cognitive skill of coherently and effectively arranging ideas[10,15]. Learners must present their ideas hierarchically, prioritizing and ordering their arguments[36]. In essence, the organization of the essay's structure is about making it evident that the student is posing their ideas to the reader in a clear, coherent, and persuasive manner[37].

2.2.3 Clarity and Persuasive Speech

Several key elements are necessary to effectively convey the message and convince the reader of the writer's point of view through a persuasive essay. Among those elements, clarity and persuasive expression seem to be indispensable for a successful persuasive essay.

Clarity is one of the critical features upon which persuasive essays are created[24,38]. When a persuasive essay lacks clarity, it becomes difficult to understand as it might be convoluted. Writing clearly and concisely can ensure the reader's grasp of the arguments laid in the essay. Thus, the writer aims to express their meaning while keeping their ideas clear and precise[39]. Furthermore, as Ke et al.[38] explain, clarity is one of the main attributes that impact thesis strength. Clarity becomes essential because a poorly organized message might undermine the writer's credibility and diminish the persuasiveness of the essay. By using clear, well-structured, and precise arguments, writers can make sure the content of their essays is explicit and free of superfluous information[40].

Effective persuasive speech allows writers to convey their ideas to influence individuals and groups to welcome a position or belief[41]. Thus attaining its goal of persuading the reader to take on the writer's point of view. However, it is of utmost importance that students use rhetorical devices to evoke emotions and stimulate thought when writing essays.

2.3 Factors Affecting Essay Writing

Three main factors affect the way students write their persuasive essays. Several authors have recognized these three factors as intrapersonal, interpersonal, and institutional[42-45].

Intrapersonal factors are the individual's features, such as beliefs and values, personality traits, motivation, experiences, and cognitive processes that influence the learner while writing persuasive essays. These factors can vary from one learner to another; however, they are vital to a person's ability to effectively draft an essay[46,47]. One such intrapersonal factor is anxiety[48]. Several studies have demonstrated the profound impact of writing anxiety, especially on low English writing proficiency students[4,49-52]. Anxiety, as the scholars have put it, can decrease student confidence and motivation.

Interpersonal factors influence the process and quality of writing, both positively and negatively. Collaboration within writing groups stimulates exchanging ideas, constructive critiquing, and fostering creativity[53]. Peer feedback has proven to boost writing quality as it emphasizes the significance of interpersonal relationships in polishing writing pieces[12]. Nonetheless, some interpersonal issues, such as conflict, disagreements, negative feedback, and lack of recognition, may hinder motivation, resulting in poor writing pieces. Lastly, cultural differences play a key role in ESL/EFL writing style and tone, highlighting the significance of cross-cultural awareness in effective communication[54].

Several institutional factors have paramount importance in shaping learners' writing skills. Among these factors, explain Felder et al.[55], three emerge as notably significant: 1) curriculum design, 2) teaching methodologies, and 3) assessment practices. According to Nielsen[56], a well-designed curriculum significantly impacts students by improving their capacity to write persuasive essays and nurturing their critical thinking abilities. The literature has demonstrated how effective methodologies like process-oriented writing instruction are. It highlights the significance of drafting, revising, and editing[57,58] to improve learners' essay writing skills. Finally, aligning assessments with instructional objectives and giving constructive feedback makes students feel motivated to concentrate on their writing and turn in better products[12,59].

2.4 Previous Research

In a mixed-methods study in Ecuador, Magali[60]

analyzed high school students' errors while practicing writing skills. Questionnaires and worksheets for writing samples were used as data collection tools. Eighty-one students and five teachers were the respondents of the study. The errors identified fell in the grammar, content, and mechanics categories. Although it does not follow the specifics of persuasive essays, this study does show some of the insufficient investigations developed in Ecuador.

A quantitative research design in Turkey[61] aimed to find learners' perceptions of challenges during their essay-writing process. The researcher looked at the writing products from first-year students of the Language and Literature department at a university in Turkey. Data was collected using a questionnaire devised by the researcher and analyzed using SPSS. The researcher concluded that learners are not keen on writing because of prior negative experiences with writing tasks. Also, learners believe the writing activities presented to them are not encouraging. There is also evidence of a lack of writing strategies on the student's part, and they think academic writing is challenging to do successfully.

Pham and Do[62] investigated 60 grade twelve students from a high school in Vietnam to identify the troubles they go through when they write their essays and their attitudes toward the writing process approach. Essays and questionnaires were the scholars' selected data collection tools. Study findings reveal students struggled with verb tenses, collocations, spelling, and verb forms. Learners had positive attitudes to the writing process.

Khatter[63] conducted a study on 120 students in Saudi Arabia. The researcher looked at essays written by 40 female English majors at a Saudi university. The essays were used to collect data along with a questionnaire. Khatter[63] found students had issues with punctuation, spelling, prepositions, articles, verb tenses, word forms, pluralization, word choice, concord, interlingual, and word order errors.

A study in Indonesia by Bulqiyah et al.[16] investigated undergraduate students' perspectives on the difficulties of writing essays. The researchers conducted a mixed-methods design, obtaining data from twenty-one web-based questionnaires and six semi-structured interviews. The scholars categorized students' problems into 1) affective issues, such as issues from students' and teachers' attitudes; 2) cognitive issues, like transferring language and the writing process; and 3) linguistic issues, which refer to grammar, vocabulary, and essay structure.

Febriani[64] conducted quantitative research with a narrative inquiry in Indonesia to investigate 33 students' difficulties when writing essays. Open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews are the tools used to collect the data. The researcher identified grammar, vocabulary, cohesion, coherence, and writing topic sentences as the issues participants revealed as their main difficulties. Internal and external factors contributed to creating these difficulties.

2.5 Research Questions

As seen above, there is a wealth of research on the challenges students perceive when writing essays. However, the existing literature on this subject focusing on the perceptions of Ecuadorian undergraduate students is notably sparse, leaving a significant gap in understanding this aspect of education. Although extensive research exists in a broader context, an evident absence of in-depth studies on Ecuadorian students' experiences endures. Thus, this research becomes significant. To guide it, the following research questions have been devised.

RQ1: What factors contribute to the challenges faced by Ecuadorian undergraduate students when writing persuasive essays?

RQ2: What are the most common challenges that Ecuadorian undergraduate students perceive when writing persuasive essays?

RQ3: Which of the dimensions identified comprise the most important challenges that Ecuadorian undergraduate students perceive when they draft persuasive essays?

3 METHODS
3.1 Paradigm, Ontological, and Epistemological Positioning

According to Doyle et al.[65], a paradigm is the group assumptions that guide research. From the several paradigms available, this research has decided to follow the constructivist paradigm, which, according to Denzin and Lincoln[66], allows the researchers to understand how the study participants depict their everyday lives. Moreover, this paradigm guides this paper as the researcher aims to understand the impact of the subjects' attitudes on their essay writing assignments.

Several authors[65,67,68] state that ontology is the way a researcher views the nature of reality, and this researcher has opted for a relativist ontological stance because it is understood that multiple realities as different participants exist are possible[67]. These various realities are constructed from the participants' perceptions and points of view. Thus, this researcher must look at the world from outside the issue investigated, notwithstanding the necessity to explain the research questions posed using the participants' input.

Finally, Bowleg[69] ascertains that epistemology, a theory of knowledge, recognizes a relationship between

Table 1. Demographic Features

Demographics	Categories	N=113	%
Gender	Male	76	67.4
	Female	37	32.6
Age	18-21	63	55.8
	22-25	37	32.5
	26-29	8	6.9
	30+	5	4.8
High school	Private	41	36.0
	Public	72	64.0
Faculty	Electricity & Computer Eng.	33	29.1
	Social Sciences & Humanities	29	25.5
	Mechanical Engineering	18	16.3
	Others	33	29.1
Time studying English	1-3 years	38	33.7
	4-6 years	30	26.7
	7-10 years	45	39.6

the researcher and the participants[68]. This perspective, defined by the researcher, helps shape the methodology and tools used in a study. Therefore, this researcher takes after Ansari et al.[67] by opting for an intermediate viewpoint between what positivists and phenomenologists posit, recognizing the value of both positions to fully understand the issue under research.

After making all these internal analyses, the researcher followed a quantitative research design to answer the questions above.

3.2 Participants

3.2.1 Recruitment

Participants in this study were recruited through convenience sampling, which, according to Creswell and Creswell[68], is done when the participants are ready and able to be studied. The researcher ensured the recruitment process would obtain a representative sample of undergraduate polytechnic students.

3.2.2 Demographics

This study's participants were the students allocated to the researcher in the second semester of 2022. The majority of the 113 students who signed the informed consent forms distributed by the researcher are men, with the remaining being women. Most students, are between the ages of 18 and 21, 33.4% are between the ages of 22 and 29, and only 4.8% are 30 or older. When asked what sort of high school they had attended, the majority said they had gone to a public school,. Of the participants, was registered in the Faculty of Electrical and Computer Engineering, while 25.5% came from the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities. Table 1

contains the full demographic details.

3.2.3 Informed Consent

Before the research started, participants were supplied with a detailed explanation of the study's purpose and procedures. They were also informed of their rights as research participants, including the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. The informed consent was obtained from each participant, and their anonymity and confidentiality were assured throughout the study.

3.3 Data Collection Tool

Data were collected employing a survey that the researcher designed. The survey contained two sections. The first section enquired about the demographic data of the participants. The second section contained the propositions for the challenges based on a five-point Likert scale, where one meant completely disagree, and five was completely agree.

The following steps were taken to ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument. First, the survey was tested for test-retest reliability, which is a method to estimate the survey's reliability by applying it to the same group of people in the same way on more than one occasion[70]. This test aims to give researchers confidence that the tool measures the outcome the same way each time it is used.

Vaz et al.[70] suggest using the Pearson coefficient to estimate the consistency of the survey. According to the authors, the Pearson correlation coefficient was (r= 0.9471), which is an excellent positive coefficient. The resulting *P*-value was 0.0032. Results that reassure the

researcher of the tool's reliability.

Next, Cronbach's alpha was calculated to measure the internal consistency within the survey. This estimation resulted in an alpha of 0.941, which is a good coefficient according to Tavakol & Dennick[71] and Taber[72].

The following analyses were performed to attest to the survey's validity. The first test done was to ensure the survey's content validity. The researcher first requested help from colleagues at the language department to be part of the panel of experts to rate the survey. According to Polit et al.[73], this panel of experts can be formed with three to five members. They were sent a validation form via e-mail to rate each of the survey's propositions from 1 (the item is not relevant to the measured domain) to 4 (the item is highly relevant to the measured domain) and clear instructions on how to fill the form. Once the expert panel's ratings were available, the researcher calculated the content validity index for the items (0.87) and the scale (0.91). These results, according to Yusoff[74], are good. Thus, the survey was positively checked for content validity.

The researcher then analyzed the survey for construct validity by performing a Factor Analysis on SPSS to identify the underlying dimensions within the survey items. The first result obtained was the KMO and Bartlett sphericity test. The resulting KMO value was greater than 0.5, standing at 0.764, which tells us there is a good sampling, and the matrix can be factored. Then, looking at the results from Bartlett's sphericity test is significant. Finally, the total variance explained by the calculation considered on eigenvalues higher than 1 to return the factors or dimensions of the survey was 61.88%, containing five factors.

Once these tests were conducted, the researcher proceeded with the piloting of the survey. Ten students from the different courses assigned to the researcher were selected at random to take part in the pilot testing. The ten students were asked to attend a meeting where instructions were given on how to treat this pilot. They were told to write down any questions they felt were difficult to understand or if there was any vocabulary they did not understand. Also, they were asked to focus on how easy the propositions were to read.

After the piloting, it was found that several propositions were challenging to understand, and the vocabulary used in most of them was too high for their level. Thus, changes were made, and the new survey version was put through a readability calculator to identify its SMOG index. The Flesh Kincaid reading ease resulted in 74, a good index according to Kincaid et al.[75]. The Gunning Score, an index that estimates the years of formal education a person

needs to understand the text on the first reading, came to 7.2, meaning that the survey can be read by students attending the seventh grade. Thus, the researcher deemed the survey ready to be sent to participants via institutional e-mails with the link to an MSForms questionnaire.

3.4 Data Analysis

Factor analysis was used to reduce the dimensions that gather students' main issues when writing their persuasive essays, thus allowing a better interpretation of the results. Principal component analysis was used for data reduction. The Varimax rotation method was used to obtain a more ordered interpretation of the dimensions.

The Kaiser criterion was used to reduce the number of factors with eigenvalues greater than one. Five factors were part of the solution and represented 61.88% of the total variance. All factor loadings were more significant than 0.5. Cronbach's alpha index in the nine factors varied between 0.768 and 0.853. The KMO index (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) was 0.867, making it an excellent value for the model. In addition, Barlett's sphericity test was significant <0.05, so it is appropriate to apply factor analysis.

The variables used for the analysis comprise the statements proposed in the survey. Although some scholars like Yong and Pearce[76] believe using this tool presents the naming of the factors as a limitation, the researcher went on regardless of the heterogeneity of the variables with other items within the same category.

4 RESULTS

The first research question wanted to identify the factors encompassing the most common challenges students perceive when writing a persuasive essay. To answer this question, the researcher conducted a factor analysis. When performing the construct validity of the survey, the KMO and Bartlett's sphericity test were completed. With the results, the researcher concluded that principal components analysis could be carried out. Table 2 contains the results of the factor analysis.

According to the results depicted in Table 2, the first dimension was labeled "Introduction" as it deals with issues with writing the hook, background information, or the thesis statement. This dimension accounted for 32.89% of the explained variance. The second factor was related to the problems students have when they have to write the topic sentences, supporting sentences, details, and concluding sentences of their body paragraphs. Therefore, this dimension was labeled "Body Paragraphs", explaining 9.90% of the total variance. The following set of challenges students face when writing their persuasive essays was named "Conclusion" and was related to their summarizing the content of the essay, effectively drafting

Table 2. Dimensions of Challenges Students Have When Writing Persuasive Essays

Variables	Dimensions				
	Introduction	Body Paragraphs	Conclusion	Sentence Structure	Communicative Achievement
I don't really understand how to write a good hook.	0.886				
The background information gives me a lot of trouble.	0.783				
Writing the thesis statement of the essay is not simple.	0.763				
I sometimes forget to write the claim of the thesis statement.	0.708				
I sometimes forget to write the supporting ideas for the thesis statement.	0.672				
Overall, I think writing the introduction of the essay is the hardest thing to do.	0.643				
It takes me a lot of time to write the topic sentence of each body paragraph.		0.860			
I do not always write the topic sentence in one or two of my body paragraphs.		0.822			
I often write topic sentences that are not related to the thesis statement.		0.783			
I have a hard time writing appropriate supporting sentences for the topic sentences.		0.730			
When I write supporting sentences, I tend to forget to include examples, reasons, or descriptions.		0.592			
Overall, I think writing the essay's body paragraphs is the hardest thing to do.		0.543			
It is difficult for me to restate the thesis statement in the conclusion.			0.789		
I do not often summarize the content of the essay in the conclusion.			0.646		
I hardly ever write a call-to-action in my essays.			0.638		
Overall, I think writing the conclusion is the hardest thing to do.			0.621		
The teacher says I don't always use the correct order of words in my sentences.				0.808	
I usually use simple sentences when I write my essays.				0.655	
I sometimes get confused and use incorrect verb tenses.				0.533	
I think it is difficult to use passive voice in my essays.				0.487	
I sometimes get confused when I have to use prepositions, articles, and pronouns.				0.483	
When the teacher gives me feedback, he says my sentences are not simple enough for an essay.					0.668
My sentences are not always as formal as they should be.					0.631
I don't always write sentences that straightforwardly express my ideas.					0.503
I have been told that my sentences don't always keep the reader's attention.					0.478
The teacher seldom tells me that my sentences are too long.					0.432
Cronbach's alpha	0.773	0.768	0.853	0.837	0.763
Eigenvalue	10.527	3.169	2.825	1.698	1.585
Variance explained (%)	32.898	9.904	8.824	5.305	4.953
Cumulative variance explained (%)	32.898	42.803	51.627	56.932	61.885

Table 3. Descriptive Analysis Performed on the Introduction Dimension

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Variance
I don't really understand how to write a good hook.	113	1.00	5.00	2.852	1.137	1.295
The background information is a part of the introduction that gives me a lot of trouble.	113	1.00	5.00	2.819	1.258	1.000
Writing the thesis statement of the essay is not simple.	113	1.00	5.00	3.262	1.009	1.230
I sometimes forget to write the claim of the thesis statement.	113	1.00	5.00	3.377	1.226	1.505
My teacher sometimes tells me I forget to write the three supporting ideas for the thesis statement.	113	1.00	5.00	3.000	1.000	1.584
Overall, I think writing the introduction of the essay is the hardest thing to do.	113	1.00	5.00	2.983	1.217	1.483

Table 4. Descriptive Analysis Performed on the Body Paragraphs Dimension

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Variance
It usually takes me a lot of time to write the topic sentence of each body paragraph.	113	1.00	5.00	3.180	1.116	1.250
The teacher sometimes tells me that I do not write the topic sentence in one or two of my body paragraphs.	113	1.00	5.00	2.852	1.062	1.128
There are times when I find myself writing topic sentences that are not related to the thesis statement.	113	1.00	5.00	3.295	0.990	0.978
I have a hard time writing appropriate supporting sentences for the topic sentences.	113	1.00	5.00	3.131	1.056	1.116
When I write supporting sentences, I tend to forget to include examples, reasons, or descriptions.	113	1.00	5.00	3.278	1.135	1.290
Overall, I think writing the body paragraphs of the essay is the hardest thing to do.	113	1.00	5.00	2.901	1.127	1.271

the call-to-action, or res-stating the thesis statement. This factor accounted for 8.82% of the explained variance. The fourth factor was related to the correct use of verb forms, passive voice, prepositions, articles, and nouns. Hence, it was labeled "Sentence Structure", which explained 5.30% of the total variance. Finally, dimension five was called "Communicative achievement, as the variables considered had to do with the formality of the sentences, how easy they are to understand, and their length. This factor included 4.95% of the explained variance. These results address the first research question.

The second research question aimed at recognizing the most common challenges Ecuadorian undergraduate students face when writing persuasive essays. The results from the descriptive analysis performed on SPSS shed light on this question. Table 3 contains the data for the first dimension, called "Introduction".

According to these results, the three challenges students consider most important regarding the different sections of the introduction section of the essay are forgetting to write the claim of the thesis statement (M=3.377 / SD=1.226), they also believe that writing the thesis statement is not a simple task to do (M=3.262 / SD=1.009), and the last issue they deem a challenge to

address is to write the three ideas to support their thesis statement (M=3.000 / SD=1.000).

Next, the dimension "Body Paragraphs" was also considered using descriptive analysis. Table 4 contains all the propositions presented in the survey.

Table 4 shows that students' three most important perceived challenges are issues related to writing topic sentences and supporting sentences. The proposition with the highest mean score regards writing topic sentences unrelated to the thesis statement (M=3.295 / SD=0.990), followed by the assertion of them forgetting to include evidence in their supporting sentences (M=3.278 / SD=1.135) and the third most common issue Ecuadorian undergraduate students deal with when writing essays regards the extensive time it takes them to write the topic sentences of their body paragraphs (M=3.180 / SD=1.116).

The following dimension analyzed was the one called "Concluding Paragraph". Table 4 shows all the descriptive information for this section of the survey. As can be seen, the biggest issue students face is not writing the call-to-action in the concluding paragraph of their essays (M=3.442 / SD=1.270). The second most significant issue they consider

Table 5. Descriptive Analysis Performed on the Concluding Paragraph Dimension

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Variance
It is difficult for me to restate the thesis statement in the conclusion.	113	1.00	5.00	2.868	1.147	1.316
I do not often summarize the content of the essay in the conclusion.	113	1.00	5.00	2.901	1.206	1.457
I hardly ever write a call-to-action in my essays.	113	1.00	5.00	3.442	1.270	1.617
Overall, I think writing the conclusion of the essay is the hardest thing to do.	113	1.00	5.00	2.491	1.104	1.221

Table 6. Descriptive Analysis Performed on the Sentence Structure Dimension

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Variance
The teacher says I don't always use the correct order of words in my sentences.	113	1.00	5.00	3.737	1.031	0.948
I usually use simple sentences when I write my essays.	113	1.00	5.00	3.049	0.973	1.063
I sometimes get confused and use incorrect verb tenses.	113	1.00	5.00	3.590	1.229	1.513
I think it is difficult to use passive voice in my essays.	113	1.00	5.00	3.372	1.068	1.509
I sometimes get confused when I have to use prepositions, articles, and pronouns.	113	1.00	5.00	3.393	1.228	1.143

Table 7. Descriptive Analysis Performed on the Communicative Achievement Dimension

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Variance
When the teacher gives me feedback, he says my sentences are not simple enough for an essay.	113	1.00	5.00	3.213	0.914	0.837
My sentences are not always as formal as they should be.	113	2.00	5.00	3.426	0.956	0.915
I don't always write sentences that express my ideas in a straightforward manner.	113	1.00	5.00	3.213	1.081	1.170
I have been told that my sentences don't always keep the reader's attention.	113	2.00	5.00	3.360	0.895	0.801
The teacher seldom tells me that my sentences are too long.	113	1.00	5.00	2.524	0.976	0.954

a challenge is not being able to summarize the content of their essay effectively (M=2.901 / SD=1.206). The last problem Ecuadorian undergraduate students admit to having is restating the thesis statement so that although it contains the same information, it does not look like a simple copy-past job (M=2.868 / SD=1.147). Table 5 depicts the descriptive analysis for this dimension.

The next dimension participants gave their opinions on was "Sentence Structure". This dimension's main issue is the correct order of the words they use within their sentences (M=3.737 / SD=1.031). The following issue concerns proper verb form use (M=3.590 / SD=1.229). As deemed by participants, the third most crucial issue is their problems with using prepositions, articles, and pronouns (M=3.393 / SD=1.228). Table 6 contains all the descriptive results for this dimension.

The last dimension identified in the factor analysis was "Communicative Achievement". This factor's top concern for learners was the tone they imprinted in their sentences (M=3.426 / SD=0.956). This is followed by how they maintain the reader's attention with their sentences (M=3.360 / SD=0.895). The third issue deals with easy-to-understand, straight-to-the-point sentences (M=3.213 / SD=1.081). Table 7 contains the descriptive data resulting from the analysis.

The third research question aimed to understand which dimension includes the most important challenges that Ecuadorian undergraduate students perceive when they draft persuasive essays. The researcher performed a descriptive analysis of these dimensions to answer this question. Table 8 characterizes the result of said analysis. Table 8 shows that the dimension with a higher mean is "Body Paragraphs" (M=18.639 / SD=4.419). In order of importance, the second dimension is "Introduction" (M=18.295 / SD=4.769). It is followed by the "Sentence

Table 8. Descriptive Analysis of the Dimensions

	N	Mean	Std, Deviation	Variance
Introduction	113	18.295	4.769	22.745
Body Paragraphs	113	18.639	4.419	19.534
Conclusion	113	11.704	3.946	15.578
Sentence Structure	113	17.163	4.321	18.673
Communicative Achievement	113	15.737	3.463	11.997

Structure" dimension with (M=17.163 / SD=4.321). Then follows the dimension called "Communicative Achievement" (M=15.737 / SD=3.463). The last dimension that concerns students is the "Conclusion" (M=11.704 / SD=3.946).

5 DISCUSSION

This study aimed to analyze the challenges that Ecuadorian undergraduate polytechnic students face when they write persuasive essays. The quantitative analysis performed allowed the researcher to answer the research questions posed. The first research question aimed to identify the dimensions underlying the challenges students face when they write persuasive essays in class. This paper demonstrates the existence of five dimensions: "Introduction", "Body Paragraphs", "Conclusion", "Sentence Structure", and "Communicative Achievement". These dimensions are similar to findings reported by Magali[60], Febriani[64], and Bulquiyah et al.[16]. However, none of these papers identify these five specific dimensions. Thus, this becomes this paper's contribution to the literature.

This research's objective was to identify the main challenges that Ecuadorian undergraduate polytechnic students face when they write persuasive essays. The researcher relied on the descriptive analysis performed on SPSS V.20 to answer the research question. This analysis was done on each dimension mentioned above to pinpoint those issues that Ecuadorian learners believe create trouble while writing their persuasive essays.

In the "Introduction" factor, the three most significant issues are not writing the thesis statement's claim and the difficulty that writing the thesis statement poses, which has also been identified by Pham and Do[62]. Also, writing the three supporting ideas of the stated thesis statement, this issue has been previously reported[64].

The three main issues the "Body Paragraphs" factor presents are related to how little or non-related some topic sentences Ecuadorian students write are to the thesis statement they first declared in the introduction section of their persuasive essay. This issue has been reported in the literature before[77]. Also, they recognized

that not adding evidence in supporting sentences is a common problem. This issue was also reported by Febriani[64]. The last issue the survey identified concerns the time students use to write their topic sentences. However, this problem has not been reported in the literature before. Thus, this becomes part of this paper's contribution to the literature.

The researcher also recognized the three most challenging issues students face in the "Concluding Paragraph" dimension. The most important issue deals with not writing the call-to-action in the essay's conclusion, which has not been found after a long search in the literature. Therefore, this issue is also a contribution of this investigation to the literature. Another problem students related is not being able to summarize the content of their essays. Again, after an exhaustive literature review, the researcher found no paper referring to this type of issue. Hence, this is another addition this paper can make to the existing literature. Yet, the last issue students consider a challenge is restating the thesis statement they originally wrote in the introduction of their essays. Researchers like Dewi[78] have reported this issue in the literature.

The fourth dimension, "Sentence Structure", deals with several issues that learners must be aware of. The researcher recognized the three most common challenges students reported in this dimension. The most important question refers to problems connected to word order, which has also been disclosed by Ariyanti & Fitriana[79], Magali[60], and Khatter[63]. The issue of word order poses a fundamental challenge for students, which can lead to confusion and error while constructing grammatically correct sentences. Moreover, this challenge can hinder learners' production of English sentences, affecting their overall communication skills.

Participants also acknowledged problems with properly using verb forms, which is noteworthy. English verbs follow complex patterns, tenses, and irregular forms, which might impact learners' writing accuracy. Other researchers have corroborated this issue[62,63,80].

Lastly, complications with prepositions, articles, and pronoun usage were also reported in this dimension.

Magali[60], Labag[81], Mohammad Hosseinpour and Ghanbarpour[82]. The complications reported here add to the complexity of mastering English sentence structure. These small but critical components of language play a crucial role in transmitting meaning accurately. Students struggle with the nuanced usage of prepositions, articles, and pronouns due to the difference between L1 and L2.

The last dimension, "Communicative Achievement", also reported three main problems. The first relates to tone, making students' essays seem badly researched or poorly argued. Rahmat[83] has also discussed this problem. Keeping the reader's attention was another issue respondents admitted in their answers to the survey, an issue corroborated by Magali[60]. The last challenge students face has to do with the ease of understanding the sentences written. Bulqiyah et al.[16] also mention this challenge in their study.

This paper's last objective was to recognize which of the dimensions of challenges perceived by Ecuadorian undergraduate students comprised the most common problems. This falls on the "Body Paragraphs" dimension, another contribution of this paper to the literature. When examining the challenges encountered while writing a persuasive essay's body paragraphs, several implications emerge for EFL essay writing. First, organization and coherence must be given proper attention. If learners struggle when structuring their arguments, disjointed and poorly organized paragraphs will result.

Moreover, inconsistent organization hinders the overall clarity and persuasiveness of the essay, affecting the writer's ability to convey their ideas effectively. Also, smooth transitions between ideas and paragraphs are crucial for coherence and flow in essay writing, which is challenging for Ecuadorian students and impacts the overall cohesion of the essay. These issues transcend a single essay's boundaries and highlight a broader difficulty in linking ideas cohesively throughout a written piece.

6 CONCLUSION

Although Ecuadorian education has undergone a hefty transformation in teaching English as a foreign language, students still find challenges when composing persuasive essays. These difficulties hinder their capabilities to convey their arguments, articulate their thoughts cohesively, and implement persuasive strategies. Thus, their academic performance and communication in the global academic arena are hindered. The extent and nature of these obstacles, encompassing linguistic, cultural, and educational factors, are still insufficiently understood. Therefore, comprehensive investigation is required to implement targeted interventions to improve students' writing proficiency. This reasoning gave birth to this research, which focused on identifying the factors

circumscribing the challenges Ecuadorian undergraduate students face when writing persuasive essays, which are the most common problems they encounter, and which factor includes the most important challenges perceived by respondents.

Five factors were determined, "Introduction", "Body Paragraphs", "Conclusion", "Sentence Structure", and "Communicative Achievement". Similar factors to these have been identified in the literature by previous investigations. The researcher pinpointed the main challenges perceived by Ecuadorian undergraduate students in each of these dimensions. The most critical challenges in each factor are: not writing the thesis statement claim, topic sentences not related to the thesis statement, not writing the call-to-action, having problems with word order, and the tone used in the essay. Finally, the dimension that learners perceive as the most challenging is "Body Paragraphs".

This paper contributes to the literature in the following senses. Students recognized that writing their topic sentences usually takes a long time. Also, participants claimed that forgetting to write the call-to-action is a challenge they face when writing their essays. Another issue determined in this paper that contributes to the existing literature regards the poor skills students have in summarizing the essay's contents when they write the conclusion of their papers. The last addition this paper makes to the literature is that "Body Paragraphs" has been established as the factor that learners believe is the hardest for them to cope with when writing a persuasive essay.

Several implications stem from the results of this investigation. First, on the social front, by identifying these problems, language departments at universities can prompt reforms in their internal policies and curriculum development. Language teachers can improve their teaching methodologies and integrate writing support with the university writing center to enhance student proficiency through more focused on-campus workshops and webinars. Insights from this research can influence policymakers to redesign the state curriculum to include more academic writing practices in higher education institutions. Thus, learners can advance their writing skills.

Practical implications can also be recommended using the results achieved by this paper. Based on the challenges identified, teachers can prepare short, focused workshops, language clinics, and online resources focusing on addressing the difficulties identified by the research, intended to enhance persuasive writing skills. Also, findings from this investigation can guide professional development courses for English language educators, provisioning them with tools and strategies to help students overcome these challenges. These

initiatives can focus on cultivating teacher proficiency in teaching persuasive writing techniques and linguistic backgrounds. Finally, insights obtained can boost feedback and assessment criteria for writing assignments. Having clearer rubrics and giving constructive feedback addressing specific challenges displayed in this research can influence students to understand improvement areas.

This study also presents limitations. Firstly, the sample size of this study is not large enough to reach generalization. Thus, conducting research with more participants is recommended, probably including all the students registered in the two English levels where essay writing is practiced. Another limitation regards the variations in language proficiency among the participants, which might affect the interpretation of results. Therefore, it is recommended for future research to try to recruit learners at the same proficiency level.

The following are the suggestions for further research. Longitudinal research could be conducted following a group of students over time. This research can examine how they work and progress to overcome the challenges presented in this paper as they advance through their academic programs. This investigation could provide a deeper understanding of the persisting difficulties and those that have changed. Also, it is suggested that a comparative study between different populations within Ecuador be undertaken. This study could assess how factors such as regional differences, educational backgrounds, or resource access impact the challenges identified in this investigation. Comparing learners from different backgrounds could reveal insightful differences.

References
[1] Lee SY, Lo YHG, Chin TC. Practicing multiliteracies to enhance EFL learners' meaning making process and language development: a multimodal Problem-based approach. *Comput Assist Lang L*, 2021; 34: 66-91.[DOI]

[2] Ibragimdjonovna AM. Developing professional communicative competence of medical students in a foreign language. *Eurasian Sci Her*, 2022; 15: 45-50.

[3] Arnó-Macià E, Aguilar-Pérez M, Tatzl D. Engineering students' perceptions of the role of ESP courses in internationalized universities. *Engl Specif Purp*, 2020; 58: 58-74.[DOI]

[4] Ibarra FDE. Improving foreign language writing anxiety and writing performance through Facebook: Evidence from Ecuadorian undergraduate students. *Electron J Foreign Lang Teach*, 2021; 18: 184.

[5] Sari TWI. The Correlation between Audience Awareness Prediction and Writing Achievement of the Sixth Semester of English Education Study Program. Universtas Sriwijaya: Indralaya, 2020.

[6] Byrnes H. Emergent L2 German writing ability in a curricular context: A longitudinal study of grammatical metaphor. *Linguist Educ*, 2009; 20: 50-66.[DOI]

[7] Alharthi S. From instructed writing to free-writing: A study of EFL learners. *SAGE Open*, 2021; 11: 21582440211007112.[DOI]

[8] Myles J. Second language writing and research: The writing process and error analysis in student texts. *Tesl-ej*, 2002; 6: 1-20.

[9] Pin-Chuan Lin M, Chang D. Enhancing Post-secondary Writers' Writing Skills with a Chatbot: A Mixed-Method Classroom Study. *J Educ Technol Soc*, 2020; 23: 78-92.

[10] Wale BD, Bishaw KS. Effects of using inquiry-based learning on EFL students' critical thinking skills. *Asian-Pac J Sec For Lang Educ*, 2020; 5: 1-14.[DOI]

[11] Latifi S, Noroozi O, Talaee E. Worked example or scripting? Fostering students' online argumentative peer feedback, essay writing and learning. *Interact Learn Envir*, 2023; 31: 655-669.[DOI]

[12] Latifi S, Noroozi O, Talaee E. Peer feedback or peer feedforward? Enhancing students' argumentative peer learning processes and outcomes. *Brit J Educ Technol*, 2021; 52: 768-784.[DOI]

[13] Kumar V, Boulanger D. Explainable automated essay scoring: Deep learning really has pedagogical value. *Front Educ*, 2020; 5: 572367.[DOI]

[14] Ozfidan B, Mitchell C. Detected Difficulties in Argumentative Writing. *J Ethn Cult Stud*, 2020; 7: 15-29. [DOI]

[15] Toba R, Noor WN. The current issues of Indonesian EFL students' writing skills: Ability, problem, and reason in writing comparison and contrast essay. *Dinamika Ilmu*, 2019; 19: 57-73.[DOI]

[16] Bulqiyah S, Mahbub M, Nugraheni DA. Investigating Writing Difficulties in Essay Writing: Tertiary Students' Perspectives. *Engl Lang Teach Educ J*, 2021; 4: 61-73. [DOI]

[17] Nejmaoui N. Improving EFL Learners' Critical Thinking Skills in Argumentative Writing. *Engl Lang Teach*, 2019; 12: 98-109.[DOI]

[18] Rapanta C. Can teachers implement a student-centered dialogical argumentation method across the curriculum?. *Teach Teach Educ*, 2021; 105: 103404.[DOI]

[19] Noroozi O, Banihashem SK, Taghizadeh Kerman N et al. Gender differences in students' argumentative essay writing, peer review performance and uptake in online

learning environments. *Interact Learn Envir*, 2022; 1-15. [DOI]

[20] Wijekumar K, Graham S, Harris KR et al. The roles of writing knowledge, motivation, strategic behaviors, and skills in predicting elementary students' persuasive writing from source material. *Read Writ*, 2019; 32: 1431-1457. [DOI]

[21] Riwayatiningsih R, Setyarini S, Putra RAA. Portraying Teacher's Metacognitive Knowledge to Promote EFL Young Learners' Critical Thinking in Indonesia. *Int J Lang Edu*, 2021; 5: 552-568.

[22] Johansson E. The assessment of higher-order thinking skills in online EFL courses: A quantitative content analysis. *NJES*, 2020; 19: 224-256.[DOI]

[23] Kim S, Yang JW, Lim J et al. The impact of writing on academic performance for medical students. *BMC Med Educ*, 2021; 21: 1-8.[DOI]

[24] Ghosh D, Khanam A, Han Y et al. Coarse-grained argumentation features for scoring persuasive essays: Proceedings of the 54th Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics (Volume 2: Short Papers). Berlin, Germany, 2016.[DOI]

[25] Alotaibi MG. The Effect of Project-Based Learning Model on Persuasive Writing Skills of Saudi EFL Secondary School Students. *Engl Lang Teach*, 2020; 13: 19-26.[DOI]

[26] Jo CW. Short vs. extended adolescent academic writing: A cross-genre analysis of writing skills in written definitions and persuasive essays. *J Engl Acad Purp*, 2021; 53: 101014.[DOI]

[27] Wambsganss T, Kueng T, Soellner M et al. ArgueTutor: An adaptive dialog-based learning system for argumentation skills: Proceedings of the 2021 CHI conference on human factors in computing systems. 2021.[DOI]

[28] Simon S. Using Toulmin's argument pattern in the evaluation of argumentation in school science. *Int J Res Method Edu*, 2008; 31: 277-289.[DOI]

[29] Stapleton P, Wu YA. Assessing the quality of arguments in students' persuasive writing: A case study analyzing the relationship between surface structure and substance. *J Engl Acad Purp*, 2015; 17: 12-23.[DOI]

[30] Metaxas N, Potari D, Zachariades T. Analysis of a teacher's pedagogical arguments using Toulmin's model and argumentation schemes. *Educ Stud Math*, 2016; 93: 383-397.[DOI]

[31] Valero Haro A, Noroozi O, Biemans H et al. Argumentation Competence: Students' argumentation knowledge, behavior and attitude and their relationships with domain-specific knowledge acquisition. *J Constr Psychol*, 2022; 35: 123-145.[DOI]

[32] Higgins C, Walker R. Ethos, logos, pathos: Strategies of persuasion in social/environmental reports. *Account Forum*, 2012; 36: 194-208.[DOI]

[33] McCormack KC. Ethos, pathos, and logos: The benefits of Aristotelian rhetoric in the courtroom. *Wash U Jurisprudence Rev*, 2014, 7: 131.

[34] Stucki I, Sager F. Aristotelian framing: logos, ethos, pathos and the use of evidence in policy frames. *Policy Sci*, 2018; 51: 373-385.[DOI]

[35] Oeppen Hill JH. Logos, ethos, pathos and the marketing of higher education. *J Mark High Educ*, 2020; 30: 87-104. [DOI]

[36] Maamuujav U, Olson CB, Chung H. Syntactic and lexical features of adolescent L2 students' academic writing. *J Second Lang Writ*, 2021; 53: 100822.[DOI]

[37] Graham S. Creating a classroom vision for teaching writing. *Read Teach*, 2022; 75: 475-484.[DOI]

[38] Ke Z, Inamdar H, Lin H et al. Give me more feedback II: Annotating thesis strength and related attributes in student essays: Proceedings of the 57th annual meeting of the association for computational linguistics. Florence, Italy, July 2019.[DOI]

[39] Murphy M. Effective scientific writing. In: Exploring Animal Behavior in Laboratory and Field. Academic Press: Cambridge, USA, 2021; 395-402.[DOI]

[40] Barroga E, Matanguihan GJ. Creating logical flow when writing scientific articles. *J Korean Med Sci*, 2021; 36: e275.[DOI]

[41] Derin T, Nursafira MS, Yudar RS et al. Persuasive Communication: What Do Existing Literature Tells Us About Persuasive Communication Among Students?. *J Ultimate Res Trends Educ*, 2020; 2: 12-18.[DOI]

[42] Cremin T, Baker S. Exploring teacher-writer identities in the classroom: Conceptualising the struggle. *Engl Teach-Pract Cri*, 2010; 9: 8-25.

[43] Baer J. Intra, inter, and extra: Experiences of linguistically-diverse college students developing as academic writers (Thesis). Boston, Massachusetts: Northeastern University, 2018.

[44] Aben JEJ, Dingyloudi F, Timmermans AC et al. Embracing errors for learning: Intrapersonal and interpersonal factors in feedback provision and processing in dyadic interactions. In: The impact of feedback in higher education. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2019; 107-125.[DOI]

[45] Ciampa K, Wolfe Z. Preparing for dissertation writing: Doctoral education students' perceptions. *Stud Grad Postdr Edu*, 2019; 10: 86-108.[DOI]

[46] Saidi M. Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Intelligences: Are they related to EFL Teachers' Self-efficacy Beliefs?. *AJELP*, 2020; 8: 53-61.

[47] El Masry T, Alzaanin EI. The impact of the intrapersonal, interpersonal and ecological factors on pre-service second language teachers' identity construction. *Saudi J Lang Stud*, 2021; 1: 50-66.[DOI]

[48] Anyan F, Ingvaldsen SH, Hjemdal O. Interpersonal stress, anxiety and depressive symptoms: Results from a moderated mediation analysis with resilience. *Ansiedad y estrés*, 2020; 26: 148-154.[DOI]

[49] Daud NSM, Daud NM, Kassim NLA. Second language writing anxiety: Cause or effect?. *Malays J Elt Res*, 2016; 1: 19.

[50] Sabti AA, Md Rashid S, Nimehchisalem V et al. The Impact of writing anxiety, writing achievement motivation, and writing self-efficacy on writing performance: A

correlational study of Iraqi tertiary EFL Learners. *SAGE Open*, 2019; 9: 2158244019894289.[DOI]

[51] Zhang X. Foreign language anxiety and foreign language performance: A meta-analysis. *Mod Lang J*, 2019; 103: 763-781.[DOI]

[52] Li R. Foreign language reading anxiety and its correlates: A meta-analysis. *Read Writ*, 2022; 35: 995-1018.[DOI]

[53] Zheng S, Zhou X. Positive influence of cooperative learning and emotion regulation on EFL learners' foreign language enjoyment. *Int J Env Res Pub He*, 2022; 19: 12604.[DOI]

[54] Kratzke C, Bertolo M. Enhancing Students'Cultural Competence Using Cross-Cultural Experiential Learning. *J Cult Diversit*, 2013; 20.

[55] Felder RM, Brent R, Prince MJ. Engineering instructional development: Programs, best practices, and recommendations. *J Eng Educ*, 2011; 100: 89-122.[DOI]

[56] Nielsen K. Peer and self-assessment practices for writing across the curriculum: learner-differentiated effects on writing achievement. *Educ Rev*, 2021; 73: 753-774.[DOI]

[57] Din WA, Swanto S, Abd Latip NA et al. The Process Approach To The Teaching Of Writing: Focus On Process Rather Than Product. *J Inform Syst Technol Mana*, 2021; 6: 63-71.[DOI]

[58] Kadmiry M. The comparison between the process-oriented approach and the product-oriented approach in teaching writing the case of Moroccan EFL students in preparatory classes for the grandes ecoles. *Arab World Engl J*, 2021; 12: 198-214.[DOI]

[59] Ramon-Casas M, Nuño N, Pons F et al. The different impact of a structured peer-assessment task in relation to university undergraduates' initial writing skills. *Assess Eval High Edu*, 2019; 44: 653-663.[DOI]

[60] Magali PPM. Ecuadorian Public High School students' errors in EFL writing skills (Thesis). Azogues, Ecuador: Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja, 2017.

[61] Ceylan NO. Student perceptions of difficulties in second language writing. *J Lang Linguist Stud*, 2019; 15: 151-157.

[62] Pham VPH, Do TPT. High school students' common errors in writing essays. *Int J Educ Tech*, 2020; 2: 309-319.

[63] Khatter S. An analysis of the most common essay writing errors among EFL Saudi female learners (Majmaah University). *Arab World Engl J*, 2019; 10: 364-381.[DOI]

[64] Febriani TN. "Writing is challenging": factors contributing to undergraduate students' difficulties in writing English essays. *J Engl Lang Teach*, 2022; 2: 83-93.

[65] Doyle L, Brady AM, Byrne G. An overview of mixed methods research. *J Res Nurs*, 2009; 14: 175-185.[DOI]

[66] Denzin NK, Lincoln YS. The Sage handbook of qualitative research. SAGE Publishing: Thousand Oaks, USA, 2018.

[67] Ansari S, Panhwar AH, Mahesar GA. Mixed methods research: Ontological, epistemological and methodological underpinnings. *Int Res J Lang Lit*, 2016; 27: 133-141.

[68] Creswell JW, Creswell JD. Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. SAGE Publishing: Thousand Oaks, USA, 2017.

[69] Bowleg L. Towards a critical health equity research stance: Why epistemology and methodology matter more than qualitative methods. *Health Educ Behav*, 2017; 44: 677-684. [DOI]

[70] Vaz S, Falkmer T, Passmore AE et al. The case for using the repeatability coefficient when calculating test-retest reliability. *PLoS ONE*, 2013; 8: e73990.[DOI]

[71] Tavakol M, Dennick R. Making sense of Cronbach's alpha. *Int J Med Educ*, 2011; 2: 53-55.[DOI]

[72] Taber KS. The use of Cronbach's alpha when developing and reporting research instruments in science education. *Res Sci Educ*, 2018; 48: 1273-1296.[DOI]

[73] Polit DF, Beck CT, Owen SV. Is the CVI an acceptable indicator of content validity? Appraisal and recommendations. *Res Nurs Health*, 2007; 30: 459-467. [DOI]

[74] Yusoff MSB. ABC of content validation and content validity index calculation. *Educ Med J*, 2019; 11: 49-54. [DOI]

[75] Kincaid JP, Fishburne Jr RP, Rogers RL et al. Derivation of new readability formulas (automated readability index, fog count and flesch reading ease formula) for navy enlisted personnel. Institute for Simulation and Training, University of Central Florida: Millington, USA, 1975.

[76] Yong AG, Pearce S. A beginner's guide to factor analysis: Focusing on exploratory factor analysis. *Quant Meth Psychol*, 2013; 9: 79-94.[DOI]

[77] Miller RT, Pessoa S. Where's your thesis statement and what happened to your topic sentences? Identifying organizational challenges in undergraduate student argumentative writing. *Tesol J*, 2016; 7: 847-873.[DOI]

[78] Dewi S. Gaps Between Expert's And Student's Exposition Texts Based On Systemic Functional Linguistics (Sfl): Implication For Teachers. *J Engl Educ Linguist*, 2021; 2: 79-92.[DOI]

[79] Ariyanti A, Fitriana R. EFL students' difficulties and needs in essay writing: Proceedings of the International Conference on Teacher Training and Education 2017 (ICTTE 2017).[DOI]

[80] Dobrić N, Sigott G, Ilc G et al. Errors as indicators of writing task difficulty at the Slovene general matura in English. *Int J Appl Linguist*, 2021; 31: 475-491.[DOI]

[81] Labag SA. Fossilized Writing Errors: A Documentary Analysis. *IJRESM*, 2022; 5: 235-240.

[82] Mohammad Hosseinpour R, Ghanbarpour F. Persian to English Lexical Transfer Errors in the Iranian EFL Learners' Writings. *J Engl Lang Teach Learn*, 2023; 15: 113-130.[DOI]

[83] Rahmat NH. Problems with rhetorical problems among academic writers. *Am J Soc Sci Humanit*, 2019; 4: 506-515. [DOI]