

## Engaging EFL Students in English Phrases of Academic Writing: How and Why?

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### **Abstract**

*Academic writing has played a significant role for academicians including EFL students in academic context. Indeed, it needs study and practice to upgrade this skill since academic writing is not really easy particularly for novice writers. This paper reports the importance of engaging EFL students in English phrases of academic writing to help them improve their academic works. Further, this study reports the EFL students' responses to the practice of English academic phrases. This study anchors in a qualitative research. Data were garnered through in-depth interviews to ten students of English Department at Institut Agama Islam Negeri Kudus. Besides, a documentation was conducted to enhance their academic writing works. The results revealed that engaging EFL students in English phrases of academic writing has been beneficial for introducing work, referring to literature, describing methods, reporting results, discussing findings, and writing conclusions. Further, they become more familiar with a number of English phrases used in academic writing. Importantly, they become more encouraged to write academic papers and improve their publication.*

**Key words:** *academic writing, English phrases, EFL students, publication*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Academic writing has a pivotal role for EFL students in higher educational settings. Indeed, these students have been demanded to acquire this skill to improve their academic publication (Wahyuningsih, 2018b). Since academic writing is a matter of process, it needs several steps in it. Dorothy E & Rumisek (2005, p. 3) have pointed out that the process of academic writing cover prewriting, drafting, reviewing and revising, and rewriting. Regarding it, in the process of writing, EFL students especially novice writers find challenges during these processes and they need more efforts to accomplish it.

One of the challenges of academic writing that mostly found by EFL students is academic convention (Abbas et al., 2020; Wahyuningsih, 2020a, 2018b). Other challenges that may become major obstacle are the difficulties of making claims and strong arguments, lack of appropriate and numerous vocabularies, and the limited style of writing. Regarding it, EFL students are needed to be more motivated in conducting the processes of academic writing through being actively trained and engaged in the writing activities.

One strategy that EFL students apply in writing their academic works is using formulaic sequences dealing with words combination that function to deliver a meaningful understanding to readers (Schmitt et al., 2019). Another strategy that can be adopted by EFL students in academic writing is the use of English academic phrases, which are some familiar English phrases used in writing introductions, referring to literature, describing methods, exploring results, discussing findings and writing conclusions.

A number of studies associated with academic writing have been previously undertaken by some researchers. De Vere Wolsey et al., (2012) have investigated the perceptions of students about academic writing and the teachers' expectation towards the student writing. They further

argue that academic writing is a platform of students in which they can explore more the domain of discourse within academic communities. Furthermore, Bell & Murray (2020) have described the intervention of education to enhance self-efficacy of academic writing in a healthcare environment. Referring to this, engaging academic writing is considerably crucial for those in various disciplines including in a health setting. Indeed, it should consider the academic voice and objectivity in academic writing (Mitchell, 2017). In accordance with the strategy of teaching, Solin (2018) has highlighted the importance of teaching portfolio in academic recruitment. In line with it, Studer (2017) emphasizes the need for conducting reflexivity in academic writing.

Regarding academic writing studies, many studies have reported that the importance of academic writing in several setting and disciplines. In addition, some studies highlight numerous problems found by EFL students in academic writing including lack of appropriate structure and English vocabularies, lack of organizing ideas, lack of delivering arguments, lack of criticizing issues (Wahyuningsih, 2018a, 2020a, 2020b, 2018b). However, few studies reported the problems of using appropriate English phrases in academic writing. Likewise, most EFL students particularly those in English Department of State Islamic Institute of Kudus have difficulties using appropriate English phrases in academic writing. Therefore, to fill this gap, this study more focuses on exploring the importance of incorporating English phrases in academic writing for EFL students.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study mainly reports the need of engaging EFL students in English phrases of academic writing to arouse them in enhancing their academic works and some ways of acquiring English academic phrases used in academic writing including introducing work, referring to literature, describing methods, reporting results, discussing findings, and writing conclusions. This study employed a qualitative research. In-depth interviews were undertaken with informants including 10 students of English Education Department of Institut Agama Islam Negeri Kudus. They are all joining an academic writing class. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Further, a documentation was conducted to obtain more data regarding the academic works of these students. Finally, the result of transcribed data and documentation were then analyzed to explain more the importance of engaging these students in English phrases of academic writing and the practice of engaging them in English phrases of academic writing.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### ***The Importance of Engaging EFL Students in English Phrases of Academic writing***

Dealing with the pivotal role of academic writing for EFL students in higher educational settings, Engaging students in learning English phrases of academic writing is increasingly important. As we have already known that some components in academic writing including the ways of expressing introduction, referring to literature, describing methods, reporting results, discussing findings, and writing conclusions have certain characteristic or contents. Introduction, for instance, contains information on importance of topic, relevant previous research, ways and strategies to fill the gap in the study (Mahmood, 2019). In referring to literature, we also are demanded to be able to select the appropriate studies in accordance with our study. Furthermore, we should make use of correct English phrases of academic writing (Sudirman et al., 2020). In reporting method, we should consider the context and setting of the study, the study design, the data collection techniques, and the data analysis techniques in detail.

In addition, in reporting findings, we should explore more in words what we have discovered in the study. Indeed, it should be elaborated in detail and in a logical sequence. Then, the findings should be discussed further in discussion session in which we can present our findings of study by relating or comparing the others' result studies and using relevant theories with our study. Finally, in writing conclusion, we do not just summarize the findings of the study. In addition, we are suggested to propose the limitation of the study, suggestion and implication for future research.

For the sake of the importance of academic writing, we are also suggested to paraphrase the text using our own sentences. As a matter of fact, many EFL students just copy others' words without paraphrasing it (Morley, 2014). Therefore, this will lead to plagiarism and it is not allowed in academic writing. With regard to this, engaging EFL students in making use of appropriate academic writing phrases is badly needed since it controls the correctness, accuracy and fluency.

In writing the introduction of research, the EFL students can use some English phrases for introduction. The following tables show the examples of English phrases for writing the introduction (Morley, 2014):

Table 1  
 English phrases of Expressing the Importance of the topic

<b>Expressing the Importance of the topic</b>	
X plays a significant role in the maintenance of.....	X has been conducted by many researchers using ....
In the new global era, X has become a main issue for ....	X is a main area of interest within the field of ....
X can play a pivotal role in arguing the issue of...	In recent years, there has been a main interest in ....
X is a major area of interest within the field of ....	A main concern of X is ....
One of the most crucial things of the 1970s was ....	The issue of X has received more attention.
A key aspect of X is ....	The developments in the field of X have led to .....

Table 2  
 Synopsis Literature and Highlighting Problems

<b>Synopsis Literature</b>	<b>Highlighting problems</b>
Previous studies have highlighted...	However, a main problem of this application is....
Recent proofs suggest that ....	However, these changes have a main impact on...

A number of attempts have been made to...	In spite of its effectiveness, X has some drawbacks...
Studies of X indicate the importance of ....	The problem of this study is....

Table 3  
 Describing A Knowledge Gap and Advocating Inadequacies of Previous Studies

<b>Describing a knowledge gap</b>	<b>Advocating inadequacies of previous studies</b>
This shows a need to comprehend the numerous perceptions of X	Researchers have not explained X in much detail.
This method has only been implemented to ....  So far, however, there has been little discussion about ....	Previous studies of X have not associated with .... The studies in the field of X have only emphasized on ....
However, X has received little attention to ....	The studies in X have only been conducted in a limited area.

Table 4  
 Stating the Aims of The Study

<b>Stating the Aims of The Study</b>	
The major objective of this study was to investigate ....	The aim of this study was to clarify several aspects of ....
The aim of this study is to investigate the differences between X and Y.	The aim of this research project has therefore been to try and establish
This study aims at....	This paper explores....

In accordance with writing methods, there are some English phrases that we can use in writing the method of research (Morley, 2014). These include:

Table 5  
 Describing Previously Used Methods

<b>Describing Previously Used Methods</b>
In recent studies, X has been measured in five various ways.
X has been measured by measuring....
various writers have measured X in several ways. Previous studies have based their criteria on ....

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Table 6  
 Giving Reasons of Using The Method

<b>Giving Reasons Why a Certain Method Was Accepted or Rejected</b>
A qualitative approach was employed to allow a...
A quantitative method offers a better way of...
The design of interview was based on....
The X approach has some interesting characteristics....
The semi-structures approach was adopted since...
The third advantage of using this method is...

Another crucial aspect in academic writing is reporting findings or results of research. In explaining results, some English phrases can be used to help writers report the results. These English phrases are outlined as follows (Morley, 2014):

Table 7  
 Reporting Results or Findings

Table 1 Figure 1	describes provides	an overview of... the results obtained from the preliminary analysis of X
The table below illustrates The pie chart above shows As shown in Figure 1, As can be seen from the table above, From the graph above we can see that It can be seen from the data in Table 1 that		some of the main characteristics of the... the breakdown of... the X group reported significantly more Y than the other two groups.
The results of the correlational analysis  The themes identified in these responses	are described are provided are presented can be compared are summarized	in Table 1 in Figure 1

Moreover, in highlighting crucial data in a table or chart, we can make use of some English phrases including:

- a. It is clear from this table that very few ....
- b. What is interesting in this data is that ....
- c. In Fig. 8 there is a trend of .....
- d. As Table 5 shows, there is an apparent difference between the two groups.

In addition, in pointing out amazing and significant findings, we can use of English phrases as follows:

- a. Interestingly, the X was observed to ....
- b. Importantly, this correlation is in accordance with...
- c. The more surprising correlation is with the ....
- d. The most striking result from the data is that ....

Furthermore, in reporting the discussion of findings, we can use a number of English phrases (Morley, 2014). These include:

- a. As mentioned in the literature review, ....
- b. The second question in this research was ....
- c. Main studies that have noted the importance of ....
- d. An initial aim of the project was to identify ....
- e. The results of this study show/indicate that ....
- f. What is surprising is that ....
- g. This finding confirms the association between ...
- h. These results match those observed in earlier studies.
- i. However, this result has not previously been described.

The last important section in academic writing is how to write an appropriate conclusion. The important parts in conclusion cover restatement of aims, summary of research findings, and suggestions of implications, and significance of the findings or research contribution. A number of English phrases that we can use in writing a conclusion are described as follows (Morley, 2014):

1. *Restatement of aims*
  - a. This paper has argued that ....
  - b. This study set out to determine ....
  - c. In this investigation, the aim was to assess ....
2. *Summarizing research findings*
  - a. This study has shown that ....
  - b. The investigation of X has indicated that ....
  - c. These findings suggest that in general ....
3. *Suggesting implications*
  - a. The evidence from this study suggests that ....
  - b. The following conclusions can be drawn from the present study ....
  - c. In general, therefore, it seems that ....
4. *Significance of the findings or research contribution*
  - a. This research extends our knowledge of ....
  - b. The present study makes several noteworthy contributions to ....
  - c. This work contributes to existing knowledge X by providing ....
  - d. The present study provides additional evidence with respect to ....
  - e. The current findings add to a growing body of literature on ....

Considering the above elaborations, it is apparently deduced that English academic phrases are crucial to help writers especially beginners like EFL students write academic papers. These phrases function to help them compose the introduction, describe method, report the results and discussion, and conclude their research.

### ***The EFL Students' Responses to the Use of English Phrases of Academic writing***

One of the strategies to overcome the students' challenges in academic writing is by engaging them to writing activities in academic writing class and incorporating them to make use of appropriate English phrases of academic writing. By introducing these academic phrases, the EFL students have positive response to the use of English phrases in academic writing in enhancing their academic works and publication. The following proofs are the responses from the EFL students:

#### **Student 1**

English phrases of academic writing are beneficial for me in writing a journal article. Honestly, I found some challenges in academic writing including the difficulties of using appropriate vocabularies, lack of making claims and lack of organizing ideas using correct English academic phrases. Through the teaching of academic phrase, I can practice in writing introduction, referring to literature, describing method and so on (Student 1, 2021).

#### **Student 3**

English phrases of academic writing help me improve my academic works. I now have been familiar with the phrases used in introducing the topic, relating and comparing literatures, describing method, reporting results and discussion, and writing conclusions (Student 3, 2021).

#### **Student 5**

I found difficulties in structuring words used in academic writing. The engagement of English phrases of academic writing is important for me to upgrade my skills in academic writing. It helps me express my ideas and arguments (Student 5, 2021).

#### **Student 8**

Students need to be engaged in writing activities and making use of English phrases of academic writing. English phrases are used to help me structure my words and organize my ideas in academic writing (Student 8, 2021).

Engaging EFL students in English phrases of academic writing has been beneficial for introducing work, referring to literature, describing methods, reporting results, discussing findings, and writing conclusions. Further, they become more familiar with a number of English phrases used in academic writing. Importantly, they become more encouraged to write academic papers and improve their publication. The following statements are the responses from the EFL students regarding the use of English phrases of academic writing:

#### **Student 2**

Knowing and becoming familiar with English phrases, I pursue myself to read some articles published in journals. I also notice some English academic phrases in several sessions of articles including introduction, method, finding, discussion, and conclusion. By reading them, I am more motivated to write academic papers (Student 2, 2021).

Student 4

I have just known that there are some English academic phrases in academic writing. I try to write academic papers. In addition, I would like to publish it in journals (Student 4, 2021).

Student 7

Reading English phrases of academic writing, I become more familiar and challenged to write academic papers. Further, I am fostered to join seminar and workshops of academic writing (Student 7, 2021).

Referring to the descriptions above, it is apparent that most EFL students has been engaged to English academic phrases and challenged to write academic papers that will be published in journals. Further, they become more interested in joining workshop or seminar to enhance their English skills particularly in academic writing.

Furthermore, students are more motivated to improve their academic works or publication. The proofs have been reported by students as follows:

Student 9

Through the information of English phrases in academic writing, I am motivated to write papers. Moreover, I am encouraged to join English competition such as essay writing, movie and so on (Student 9, 2021).

Student 10

The engagement of English phrases of academic writing has enlightened me in writing academic papers. I become known how to write introduction, method, findings, discussion and conclusion. In short, I am motivated to publish my work in journal (Student 10, 2021).

Dealing with these descriptions, it seems that EFL students feel more acknowledged of composing academic papers. They are helped by the use of English academic papers used in academic writing parts including introduction, method, result, discussion and conclusion. This result is in accordance with Howe & Kristina (2014) inserting that getting familiar with English phrases are apparently crucial to help students write academic papers. In addition, the need of being familiar with English academic phrases are not only for EFL students but also for academicians from various disciplines (Salamonson et al., 2010).

## CONCLUSION

This present study describes the need of engaging EFL students with the use of English academic phrases in academic writing. Based on the interview with students, it was found that engaging EFL students in English phrases of academic writing has been beneficial for introducing work, referring to literature, describing methods, reporting results, discussing findings, and writing conclusions. Further, they become more familiar with a number of English phrases used in academic writing. Additionally, they become more encouraged to write academic papers and improve their publication. It is kindly suggested that EFL students develop their English skill particularly writing by getting involved to writing activities including workshop, seminar and trainings. This study hopefully gives implications for writing curriculum developer to include academic phrases in academic writing considering its importance.

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