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Article

English academic writing through the lens of culture: Implications for current practices in Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

Academic writing is a crucial skill for language learners, especially at tertiary education level. Various studies have pointed out several setbacks and difficulties faced by learners of English. However, when it comes to the essential reasons behind these, the writer's cultural identity and the hegemonic nature of writing conventions may cause dilemmas for both teachers and learners. This paper situates the discussion of English academic writing conventions as perceived in Vietnam, problematizing how Vietnamese EFL (English as a foreign language) learners are culturally informed and engaged in the process of acquiring skills and knowledge and whether relevant ``local'' stakeholders are aware of the long-standing difficulties that the students face in their very own academic territory.

Key words: English academic writing, writing conventions, culture

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INTRODUCTION

Academic writing (AW) takes several forms. It could be a conventional five-paragraph essay written as an assignment at university. Or it could be a larger-scale project like a thesis, a research paper, a journal article or a report. Researchers have long been viewing AW as an essential skill, literacy even, especially in higher education context. For English as a foreign language (EFL) or English as a second language (ESL) learners, once engaged in the language production process, they do not only acquire the writing conventions in their institutional or disciplinary contexts but also enter a negotiation process between L1 and L2 writing conventions and between the writer's identity and the embedded, covert cultural features of English expected by the audience in a different education context (Phan, 2011)[1]. Henceforth, EFL learners often need to align themselves with the rhetorical conventions of their disciplinary community, while struggling with finding their own voice or identity as a writer.

While contrastive rhetoric may be considered an efficient way of making non-native writers of the English language more aware of different conventions (İnceçay, 2015)[2], it may also present certain problems concerning language crossing and academic competence, which may ultimately affect how writers present themselves. Several researchers (Lehman, 2018; Phan, 2009)[3,4] opted for a quest on intercultural rhetoric, where culturally situated notions of AW are analyzed based on socio-cultural factors, institutional contexts and the student's identity as a writer. In this respect, the lexico-grammatical and rhetorical choices students make should be viewed as a result of their communicative competence, and thus reveal their identity under the first culture's influence.

This paper offers a review of the influence of culture on academic literacy, pointing out that cultural differences and cultural thought patterns may often result in different ways of negotiating meaning in language production. This central point is analyzed based on cases where international students deal with their own dilemmas as writers when living and writing in a different academic culture. From that departure point, the paper also addresses the culturally long-standing struggles EFL students face when learning to write academically in English in their own country. The case in point is Vietnam, particularly in the higher education context where students realize the need to use English for academic purposes in their disciplines. Pedagogical implications are offered to local stakeholders (i.e. researchers, teachers, policy-makers), re-addressing how culture and current English language teaching (ELT) practices intertwine to present both challenges and opportunities for learners and teachers of English AW.

THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURE ON ACADEMIC WRITING

"A different language is not just a dictionary of words, sounds, and syntax. It is a different way of interpret-

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ing reality, refined by the generations that developed the language."

– Federico Fellini, Filmmaker and director, Italy

This saying generally reminds many of the idea of linguistic relativity, often known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which suggests that differences in languages are reflected in the worldviews of their speakers. A non-native language user may, thus, write in English but still, to a certain extent, maintain or incorporate patterns of thoughts and ideas originated from and nurtured by the culture where they come from.

Cultural differences

In order to explore how AW conventions are defined by culture, relevant concepts are revisited here, not to essentialize the differences between different cultures in communication, but to serve as the theoretical departure point for why expectations may not be met in AW.

(1) Low-context and high-context cultures

According to Storti (2011)[5], in low-context cultures, the content in the message is overt and language users often get to the point quickly. Meanwhile, in high-context cultures, the message content is often subtle, indirect or even hidden, and contextual clues (i.e. non-verbal language) are important in attaining comprehension. This contrast often results in differences in cognition and communication behaviors. While content is what writers care about in low-context cultures, the medium of how the message is conveyed is favored in high-context cultures. For instance, as pointed out by Phan (2011)[1], in English, the writer is responsible for delivering a clear, concise message, while in Vietnamese, it is the audience who need to interpret the underlying message presented in the text. The introduction in an essay in Vietnamese thus tends to be longer, often embellished with anecdotes, stories, or background information.

(2) Tight cultures vs. loose cultures

In tight cultures, social norms are strictly to be followed. According to Gelfand et al. (2011)[6], at the psychological/behavioral level, people coming from tight cultures have low tolerance of deviant behaviors. People are more dutiful and obedient, with a high degree of self and social regulation. Meanwhile, in loose cultures, people are more tolerant of diversity and enjoy greater freedom in terms of behaviors. Another accompanying assumption is that, as people from loose cultures are more permissive, they are open to new ideas and thus are more creative. English-speaking countries appear on both sides of the loose and tight continuum (e.g. U.S. as loose culture and the U.K as tight culture), and thus, there may be different ways in which native or non-native English users develop and organize their ideas when engaging in English AW.

(3) National cultural dimensions

Through a study conducted on IBM staff between 1967 and 1973, updated later in 2010, Hofstede et al. (2010)[7] categorized how values in the workplace are influenced by culture. The main thesis of their study is that the value dimensions are presented as "collective mental programming of the mind" and this particular operating system helps one distinguish one group of people from another (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 6)[7].

Table 1 summarizes how each cultural dimension is described. A dimension is an aspect of culture that can be compared and relatively measured against other cultures. These dimensions serve as a framework to "measure" national culture as each country is given a point (up to 100). In real-life practices, these dimensions are considered to complement one another in giving a comprehensive analysis of the people's behaviors and values in a nation. These dimensions are not absolute indicators, but often used as a reference for prediction in several cross-cultural encounters.

All in all, these concepts are complementary as they share commonalities and critical ideas that support the concept of *cultural relativism*. In this regard, no one culture is above another, nor can one judge others' culture as noble or low, right or wrong. Understanding cultural differences is the first step towards building empathy and comprehensive insights into how notions of AW vary in different societies.

The culturally situated notions of academic literacy

Lehman (2018, p. 95)[4] defines the term "academic literacy" as the "manifestation of systemic language behaviors in writing for a small audience, typically instructors and peers [...] to argue a thesis and support it with convincing justifications." The systematic language behaviors involve conventions that are taught at the earlier point of the language acquisition journey. For instance, in order to write a paragraph, learners are often advised to include a thesis statement and use signposts and concise language to build up paragraph unity and coherence (Lehman, 2018)[4]. However, when writers retain their idiosyncratic, L1-imbued ways of reasoning, these ways may conflict with the norms expected in the new AW culture, which may affect how their writing is evaluated.

Table 1: Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions (adapted from Hofstede et al. 2010)[7]

Cultural Dimensions	Description
Power distance (PDI) (high vs. low)	Extent to which a culture accepts that power is unequally distributed in institutions and organizations
Individualism (high vs. low)	Degree to which individuals identify themselves as part of larger whole or sacrifice their own needs for others
Achievement vs. Nurturing (now Motivation towards Achievement and Success)	Contrasting pursuit of material goods versus the importance of relationships and concern for the welfare of others
Uncertainty Avoidance (high vs. low)	Degree to which a culture avoids uncertainty or tolerates and welcomes it
Time Orientation (long-term vs. short-term)	Delaying short-term success in favor of success in the long-terms versus focus on the near future

Regarding these idiosyncrasies in terms of reasoning, Kaplan (1966)[8] and Galtung (1981)[9] proposed cross-cultural differences in terms of idea development. Kaplan (1966)[8] proposes five different cultural thought patterns (Figure 1).

Meanwhile, in Galtung's (1981)[9] words, these differences reflect "intellectual styles" in the education system of each culture. Table 2 presents the corresponding ideas of the two taxonomies as proposed by Lehman (2018)[4] and Siepmann (2006)[10].

It can be observed that both researchers based their taxonomy on different societies or countries. For instance, while Kaplan (1966)[8] uses "oriental" to refer mostly to Asian countries and their focus on background information before coming to the main point, Galtung (1981)[9] uses the word "Nipponic" which holds Japan, an east Asian country, as the representative for this thought process. The naming itself may present a certain level of stereotype. At the same time, reducing thought patterns to just a few categories may pose the problem of oversimplification, which is the often-seen criticism that many taxonomies face. As a result, existing studies often particularize a certain case in point by critically including various factors that may affect one's performance in AW.

For example, Siepmann (2006)[10] particularizes the cultural differences by investigating the three cases of postgraduate students' AW styles in France, Britain and Germany. Accordingly, "bon francais" is referred to as how the Romance or Gallic style is actualized: the essay has a clear organization and information asymmetry is obtained by having paragraphs of similar length. Meanwhile, in Britain, no digression or repetition should be expected. The "explicit coherence" is what lies at the heart of the Saxonic style here. In contrast, implicit coherence is what is accepted in German AW where the content matters more than the style and student-writers are allowed more freedom to digress to secondary literature to extend their content.

To continue the literacy discussion, one's performance in AW is not only culturally and socially shaped, but may also vary across disciplines. Kaufhold (2015)[11], in his study on conventions in postgraduate AW, proposes three drivers that affect students' thesis writing experience, namely (1) their thesis topic and interdisciplinary knowledge, (2) their short-term/long-term aims, and (3) the institutional structures, often mediated by the supervisor. In the third regard, Kaufhold (2015)[11] maintains that the prior experiences, along with the discipline-specific conventions obtained from the networking they accumulate from the supervisor and their peers, shape students' expectations of how their writing is assessed. For instance, Miriam, a Northern European sociologist student in Kaufhold's (2015)[11] study, remarked that writing in the field of Sociology would require a "stronger focus on theory" while that in Business would often revolve around "real world problem" (p. 130). Besides, as observed in the case, her linguistic choice of frequent hedges and direct quotations is assigned to her discipline's readings and her feminist epistemological approach.

Canagarajah (2007, p. 923)[12] makes a clear point: "Language learning and use succeed through performance strategies, situational resources, and social negotiations in fluid communicative contexts. Proficiency is therefore practice-based, adaptive, and emergent." In Kaufhold's (2015)[11] words, one's competence is built upon the "literacy histories," which are prior experiences of writing that students accumulated while participating in a range of academic practices. Writing in an L2 goes beyond the essentialist idea of the five-paragraph essay, which is reflective of the Anglo-American academic tradition (Kaufhold,

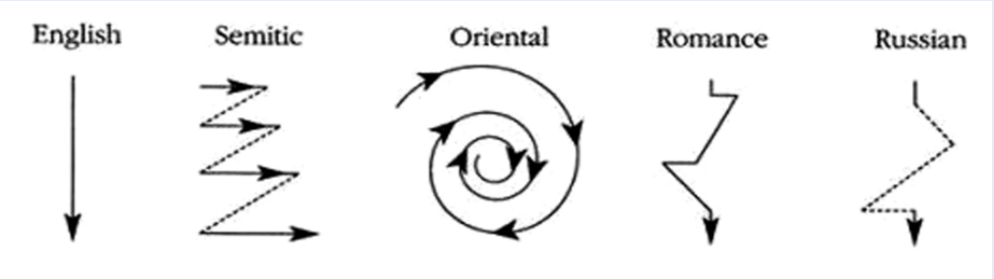

Figure 1: Cultural thought patterns (Kaplan, 1966, p. 6)[8]

Table 2: Proposed taxonomies of cultural thought patterns

Kaplan's (1966) taxonomy	Galtung's (1981) taxonomy	Description (Lehman, 2018[4]; Siepmann, 2006[10])
English	Saxonic	Speakers/writers have a clear purpose, a matter-of-fact tone and are very direct and positive in their assertions. Data analysis is favored over theory formation.
Oriental	Nipponic	Academic tradition features a more modest, global and provisional approach, in which knowledge and thinking are thought of as being in a temporary state and open to change.
Romance	Gallic	Linguistics artistry is prioritized and writing should show a balance and symmetry in terms of both clarity and elegance.
Russian	Teutonic	Theoretical arguments are often placed at the center of the thought process rather than data analysis.
Semitic	N/A	A series of parallel, coordinate clauses predominantly begin with some type of universal statement and is concluded by a formulaic or proverbial truth.

2015)[11], or the spelling, lexicon and grammar of one language (Phan, 2009)[3]. Writing also involves how ideas are organized or how information is structured and ways of reasoning or building "convincing justifications", which may be influenced by the writer's cultural background.

Phan (2001)[13] refers to cross-cultural issues as "gatekeeping events" that affect how Vietnamese students' writing performance is assessed in Australian AW context. Coming to study in a new environment, they are often considered not critical as their writing habits reflect indirectness, implicitness, and circularity. The Vietnamese postgraduate students generally ascribed the difficulties they faced in AW to cultural factors and socio-political discourse convention of their country where such behaviors mean being tactful and polite in communication. A key finding from Phan's (2001)[13] study is that students reported on improvement in reasoning once they start to "think in English." One student reported on having barely any problems in AW because she never actually learned about the theories in Vietnamese. In other words, the students resorted to no other alternatives than thinking in English and following rules for essay writing in English to fit in the new academic environment in Australia.

In another ethnographic study by Coleman and Tuck (2020)[14], the ambivalence of the writing culture and the problem with teaching AW are further explored in the vocational education context. Unlike traditional universities, vocational universities place more value on practical and professional knowledge. Meanwhile, how AW is taught at vocational institutions usually does not align well with students' epistemic approach. In other words, AW has been over-generalized and decontextualized, which results in the fact that both teachers and students in this specific academic context feel like they do not have their own identity in the culture of writing. This is conceptualized as "academic drift," a phenomenon in which values associated with the traditional universities' discourse convention prevail and dismiss values associated with the vocational institutions (Coleman & Tuck 2020)[14].

All in all, there is no one-size-fit-all way of assessing academic literacy. And even in specific circumstances, there is a complicated negotiation process going on among the stakeholders. Van-Vuuren (2013) [15], in his longitudinal study, addresses that the information structure features of the native language (Dutch) are often transferred to their English even after "three years of academic exposure" (p. 173). Accordingly, for EFL majors (i.e., the participants of Van-Vuuren's study [15]) to achieve near-native proficiency, it is important that they are exposed to materials that address the cross-linguistic (and cross-cultural) differences. Another interesting pattern was spotted in a small-scale qualitative research by İnceçay (2015) [2], in which Turkish students were found to have difficulties in writing L1 essays now that they had been familiar with English writing conventions. In other words, once they discover a new academic environment using English, it may be somehow challenging for them to "cross back" naturally to their L1. At the same time, as other studies have pointed out, their English is often influenced by their L1's cultural legacy. Hence, L2 learners, besides worrying about grammar and writing conventions, also need to negotiate with themselves and the academic environment in getting their ideas across.

Academic writing as a social negotiation process

In one of the three cases that Kaufhold (2015) [11] examined, a Southern European student majoring in Linguistics used the first person pronoun (i.e., *I*) as a way of presenting her aesthetic and engaging writing style. In one sentence of her conclusion, she accidentally used "*we*" and later realized it was a mistake.

"Insofar, **we** have attempted to present the main standpoints of three distinct language-related areas: ..."

(Zoe's draft, p. 15, as cited in Kaufhold, 2015, p. 129) [11]

The process of explaining why this is wrong reveals the stakeholders in her writing negotiation:

(1) The writer vs. L1 influence: She has been familiar with how written texts in her L1 use the pronoun that way, which has somehow shaped her writing intuition/habit.

(2) The writer vs. the readers: She uses "*we*" to create a more inclusive exchange of ideas with her readers, who may have been bored with the theories in the writing so far.

(3) Identity vs. AW conventions: The writer is knowledgeable about AW conventions. She purposefully chooses to write in the first person perspective to make her writing smooth and aesthetic (Kaufhold, 2015) [11].

At the same time, the student also knows that it is inappropriate to use the first-person pronoun in certain contexts. She later shifted the use of the inclusive "*we*" to the introduction, which seems to achieve the effect she expected (Kaufhold, 2015) [11].

Similar conflicting patterns of negotiation are also presented in several other studies. Phan (2001) reported that postgraduate students needed time to adjust to the Australian AW convention at university. In this regard, there is a negotiation of meaning and belief. While politeness is often translated to circularity in writing style, in this new AW context, politeness is associated with commentative language (Skelton, 1988, as cited in Crompton, 1997) [16] and allows space for being objective. What previously has been considered indirect and less critical is now materialized in the form of hedges such as impersonalized construction and passivization, which are part of the typical information structure often discussed in academic English (Blake, 2015) [17].

In another study, Phan (2009) [3] found that the negotiation is between creativity, writer's voice and the AW norms. What makes this negotiation intriguing is how it indicates the struggle of both the student (Arianto) and the teacher/supervisor in the case: both of them use English as a second language and they both have a passion for positioning their own voice in their writing. Even so, there are justifications and contradictions coming from both the supervisor and the student while assessing the written texts, trying to accommodate the AW conventions as expected at the institution. In her study, Phan (2009) [3] remarked that Arianto went from being colonized to self-colonization. In other words, one's academic literacy could be interpreted as the negotiation between powers. As English has now become an academic lingua franca, the English AW conventions decide how one should present his or her arguments. In an assertive tone, this could be addressed as a linguistic colonization process. EFL/ESL users who embarked on this writing journey often find themselves getting stuck between the process of colonization (i.e. consciously conforming to the AW convention in a specific education context), de-colonization (i.e. being creative and maintaining their voice and identity) and self-colonization (i.e., subconsciously conforming to the AW, not knowing that they may be losing their own voice).

The negotiation process could be further analyzed departing from the concept of language crossing. According to Rampton (1995, p. 485) [18], language crossing "involves code alteration between people who are not accepted members of the group associated with the second language that they are using". In other words, there is the implication of ingroup and outgroup belonging, which is characteristic to studies in culture. Language crossing, thus, depicts not only the movement over the linguistic border but also the cultural border in order to get "accepted" as an ingroup of another society. Through the lens of sociolinguistics, this can be viewed as a clash of powers in several cases cited in this paper: the idea of "being accepted" forces writers to learn and adapt to their new academic environment, yet at the same time, they may need to suppress their own identity construction.

Most of the cases presented so far in this paper have focused on how students negotiated their prior experiences in AW when moving to a different academic context (i.e. whether they should conform to English AW conventions or retain their writer's voice and identity). The next section situates the ideas of cultural differences and the dilemma in the current practices of teaching English AW in Vietnam, especially at higher education institutions (HEIs) where the acquisition of the writing convention is required for future professional development of the students.

TEACHING ENGLISH AW IN VIETNAM: PROBLEMATIZING CURRENT PRACTICES

Most of the time, ELT teachers receive learners' questions regarding word choice or grammatical structures in writing classes. In teaching General English, the idea of a "writing culture" is not strongly visible. However, when it comes to Academic English courses, especially those for English major students at universities, writing courses tend to require students to have a clearer voice as a writer. Who, then, should be the ones who help constitute their fledgling voice? In order to prepare students for further cross-cultural encounters in the future, it is important for HEIs to revisit their current practices in teaching English AW, probably in a more context-informed way.

Learners' difficulties in AW in Vietnam

Previous studies outline two recurring themes of EFL learners in Vietnam when it comes to possible difficulties in learning AW. First, there is a remark that Vietnamese EFL students are not critical and creative enough. In Phan's (2001) [13] paper, this is assigned to the politeness value. Meanwhile, Nguyen, H. N. and Nguyen, D. K. (2022) [19] stated that the cultural divergence of L1 and L2 is what prevents Vietnamese test-takers from achieving a higher score in IELTS Writing Task 2. Nguyen, T. K. C. (2022) [20] reviewed the teaching methods at a secondary school and remarked that learners wrote in English as mimics, not creative thinkers. This may be further perpetuated in the future if writing courses continue to stick to controlled practice.

Another group of learners' difficulties is systemic bad habits that result in grammatical errors and poor idea development. Vuu (2016) [21] addressed the issue of text incoherence in students' writing, associating the negative performance with activities like drilling grammar structures at sentence level. In her study on the use of inversion structures in AW, Tran (2018) [22] assigned learners' difficulties to the lack of materials and practice. Similarly, Ngo and Truong (2023) [23] brought forth the fact that EFL learners do not have enough time for writing practice in their high school years. Writing to them is a daunting task with no clear instructions. Bad habits include not having an outline before they write or not considering proofreading as necessary in the process of writing.

Another culturally-rooted problem to Vietnamese EFL learners could come from the nature of the prompts or writing topics they engage with. For instance, if Vietnamese EFL learners are given topics such as abortions or racism, which are more familiar to a U.S. student, they are expected to have difficulties shaping arguments while dealing with the essentially different viewpoints embedded in the political culture they grew up in. In this case, it would be quite unfair to blame the Vietnamese learners for not being critical enough.

Situating academic writing conventions in Vietnam

As reviewed above, according to Gelfand et al. (2011) [6] and Storti (2011) [5], Vietnam is a tight culture with a high-context communication style. This can be mapped onto Hofstede Insights' (n.d.) [24] cultural dimensions. From the national culture approach, Vietnam scores 70 on PDI and 30 on Individualism (see Figure 2). With these scores, Vietnam is described as a collectivist society that accepts hierarchical social order. A high PDI is used to explain the value of politeness, which explains how Vietnamese students tend not to write in an assertive voice in their essay.

When projected onto these cultural dimensions, Vietnamese culture may cause certain problems for Vietnamese students when they engage in Western AW

Figure 2: Vietnam's scores on cultural dimensions (Hofstede Insights, n.d.)[24]

convention. First, the face-saving or politeness feature in language use, which is sometimes remarked as less critical, could be predicted based on Vietnam's high score in the power distance dimension. Second, coming from a collectivist society, Vietnamese EFL beginners may believe that citing others' ideas without acknowledging the original sources is an unharmed share of common knowledge and thus is acceptable. Yet this practice is considered plagiarism in the Western AW. Finally, as a low UAI (Uncertainty Avoidance) society, it is expected that deviance from norms and rules is more easily tolerated. This could explain why Vietnamese students stated that they were "not explicitly taught how to write essays" in their home country and thus felt confused when transferred to a different L2 writing context (Phan, 2001, p. 301)[13].

Studying English AW in Vietnam does not mean that learners are cut off from cross-cultural encounters. Factors such as globalization, technology advances and ELT innovations are drivers that may affect the practices of teaching English AW in Vietnam HEIs. With greater opportunities for mobility and better achievement in the internationalization process, HEIs become the academic cradle that nurtures learners' intercultural competence. Furthermore, the increasing number of social media platforms and language learning apps allow learners flexible ways of getting their ideas across to a larger audience. As for language pedagogy, the Western-originated learner-centered approach and the Communicative Language Teaching approach prevail in current discussion on learners' needs and building effective lessons. It can be observed that there are many Western-based concepts yet a scarcity of "localized" aspects surrounding the discussion. Taking these drivers into consideration, the next section explores pedagogical implications for the teaching of English AW in Vietnam.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Based on the problematized cultural differences, various notions of academic literacy and the social negotiation in AW as reviewed in the previous sections, we conclude this paper with three pedagogical implications for the teaching of English AW in Vietnam.

(1) Building culturally informed lessons in AW courses

A genre-based approach could be a good answer to how teachers can help learners overcome difficulties by designing lessons that are more culturally informed. As teachers, we need to simulate a writing culture for our learners, i.e., make it less daunting and more relevant to the academic discipline of the students. Evans (2019)[25] proposes that non-English major postgraduates in Vietnam, especially those in science-based courses, could benefit from a "genre-sensitive" pedagogy in their program. Trinh and Nguyen (2014)[26] also emphasize on the benefits that a genre-based approach brings about in helping students better understand the organization of ideas and the purpose of writing. Students also become more confident and believe more in their ability to write, even when English is not their forté.

Additionally, letting learners become more familiar with contrastive rhetoric and conventions are also recommended in many studies. İnceçay (2015)[2] found that "contrastive rhetoric" helps students think more critically in the writing process. This process involves getting learners to become more familiar with metalanguage and deal with their writing experience. Meanwhile, according to Kaya and Yağız (2023)[27], those who understand the scholarly writing conventions and norms are more likely to have their manuscripts published in the world of academia.

What should be revisited is how teachers can balance the inclusion of AW conventions at HEIs in connection with discipline-specific writing tasks. The coursebook and syllabi used in the curriculum should be updated so that the language input that learners receive could actually benefit them in real-life intercultural and disciplinary encounters. Extra-curricular Writing Groups (e.g., Writing Centers or specialized writing centers) and Writing Fellows (i.e. special tutoring) (Russell, 2016)[28] could serve as a community of learning where learners can get exposed to different groups of audience, thus improve their skills in negotiating ideas, become more creative and develop their identity as a writer. While this seems like a Western idea, it should be revisited and contextualized by policy-makers at HEIs in Vietnam as a crucial step towards actualizing a writing culture in different academic disciplines.

(2) Glocalizing the learner-centered approach

While the notion of having a class built around learners' needs is tempting, it can make teachers feel "colonized, inferior, devalued, and disempowered by policy-makers, administrators, colleagues and societies' favoritism towards learner-centered education (LCE) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)" (Phan, 2014, p. 5)[29]. With educational reforms happening around the globe, it is challenging yet necessary for teachers to be aware of recent trends and pedagogical ideas. There is a need to consider new ideas in the social context of one's country. Learners may feel lost if their teacher just comes to a writing class and acts as a facilitator in the whole learning process. LCE is essentially a Western concept. So if this is to apply in the case of Vietnam where L2 learners come from a very different culture, there needs to be consideration for both the attitude and reaction of the teachers and learners. At first, Vietnamese learners may not seem to really enjoy the ambiguous freedom they have in the classroom and would prefer something more concrete as learning material. Although it can be difficult for the teachers in the initial stage of instructions, the teachers should raise learners' awareness of the cross-cultural values so they can nurture their writer's identity and become more prepared and informed for the negotiating process in finding their own voice in L2 writing.

(3) Focusing on teacher training programs and professional development amidst the era of technology advances

As the focus is now shifted to the teacher's role, it is crucial to particularize how teaching staff help their learners across disciplines. Courses and workshops such as "Writing in the Disciplines" and "Writing Across the Curriculum" contribute greatly to the teachers' professional development and awareness of how to help students from diverse intellectual backgrounds improve their writing competence (Russell, 2016)[28]. Teachers should also be aware of the shift in the role of AW, treating it not only as a tool of assessment but also as a tool to help learners transfer AW skills to courses in their own disciplines (Russell, 2016)[28]. As a result, learning activities should have more practical learning outcomes and a clear realization of how the writing products are helpful and critical to learners' development.

While teachers may struggle with how to help students establish their identity as a writer in their own discipline, several facilitators emerge. Take recent AI (artificial intelligence) tools for example. Teachers should be aware of writing tools that can create and analyze texts (e.g., Chat GPT), as their learners may also be aware of these tools. These are great facilitators, but at the same time, could pose a threat to learners if they are not aware of the long-term effects that can hinder their creativity and identity along the journey of becoming independent writers. Thus, teachers should be well informed with updated knowledge and sufficient training in order to assist students in this technology era.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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