

## Report

# Introduction to Academic Writing Course (MBBS)

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### **Abstract**

*The demand for the study of second or foreign-language English is extremely high, which places a heavy burden on educational resources in many nations. Specific vocabulary and abilities pertaining to professional communities and academic fields are needed for ESP courses. Internationally, English is used extensively in higher education. The demand for academic English courses has grown significantly (Jordan, 1997).*

*English, the universal language of science, is now known as English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in non-English speaking nations (Ghanbari, 2010). The teaching of English as a Second Language (ESP) in Sindh is a growing field. Learning English for a specific purpose is an essential part of language instruction at the higher educational level, with the objectives being to learn specialized vocabulary, increase subject knowledge by reading in English, and be able to use the language in a potential profession or study area by getting ready for some common situations, like carrying out higher level studies, attending an interview, or conducting professional conversations (Varnosfardani, 2009).*

*Many English language courses in academic contexts are built on the premise that language should be connected to the purpose for which students are expected to use the language after their studies. For medical students, the purpose of an ESP course is to support them in their academic work and future jobs. English is particularly significant in medical learning because medical textbooks and professional publications are predominantly written in English (Bensoussan, Collado, Viton, & Delarque, 2009).*

*English as the primary language for international communication is now generally acknowledged. Determine the issues with ESP classes by carefully examining the attitudes and views of students and teachers. Learning a second language is generally seen as distinct from learning one's native tongue, and it is frequently believed that factors affecting one's ability to learn a second language have no bearing on the development of one's native tongue.*

*Knowledge of a second language affects one's capacity to manage information in the native tongue. Contemporary cognitive and psycholinguistic models of bilingualism claim that the two languages*

*interact, even during language-specific processing. Understanding the interaction between two languages is crucial since it is still being determined how acquiring a second language impacts native-language function.*

**Background of the study:**

*At an average age of 18, Dow Medical University in Sindh students enter medical college straight out of high school. To evaluate students, the educational system mostly uses teacher-based assignments, exams based on memorization, and norm-referenced tests. The majority of students develop passive learning habits as a result. The major language of instruction in Sindh's secondary school system is urdu; beginning in grade 4, English is introduced as a second language. Because the medical school curriculum is delivered in English, all first-year students receive an intensive English course in addition to their other premedical requirements, regardless of their level of language proficiency.*

*Students are soon made aware of the necessity to acquire effective learning abilities when they realize how much more academic pressure there is when they enroll in the university.*

**Statement of the problem:**

*As a result of the English language barrier, medical students learning in an EFL environment have been seen to struggle with their medical schoolwork. The students are familiar with the specific vocabulary and grammatical patterns used in this context of the English language.*

## **1. Introduction**

Early academic writing and research skill development is essential for success in both academic and professional settings. This course intended to educate students on the rules of academic writing in English and the components and benefits of what is known as process writing. To provide them the chance to try out these tools and reflect on their growth as writers. - To help students develop their own "toolbox" of academic writing skills. Despite being a pilot course, the course covered a number of crucial areas of academic writing.

The course *Introduction to Academic Writing* aimed to render undergrad-medical students the basic understanding and essential skills of the written academic discourse. The main focus of the course was the style, language, and conventions used in academic writing. This course was a hands-on opportunity for students to learn to communicate their ideas in clear and compelling prose.

Kayaoğlu, M. N., and Akbaş, R. D. (2016) stated that Teaching and learning English as a second or foreign language has become very common in today's world as a result of English becoming the de facto language of international communication. English is widely used for communication in various industries, including the medical sciences. There is no denying that English has spread over the world. The language of choice for worldwide communication in a variety of sectors, including business, science, education, and the media, is now English (Alqurashi, 2016). As a result, significantly more people are now studying English (Karimnia, 2018). Specifically, English is used by the scientific community as its primary language. Since many professional texts are written in English, those with

strong English communication skills can keep up with developments in their field of study (Pritchard et al., 2004). More than half of the online content is available in English because more than 52% of the most popular websites show their content in the language (Ets worldwide, 2020). . Furthermore, stress that “English is of particular relevance for science students because it is the main international language of science and is regarded as an effective means of helping those students to become familiar with professional texts written in English

Kang (2004) underlines the significance of English as an international language in medical studies, given that nearly all modern medical textbooks are written in this language. By outlining the importance of English for Medical Purposes (EMP) as a kind of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Kurfürst (2005) and Joesba and Ardeo (2005) draw attention to this. They assert that medical students who study English will be able to read medical textbooks, journals, and English-language publications. They will also be able to get ready for taking part in group projects and attending international medical conferences.

Kurfürst (2005) also notes that medical students who acquire English will be able to write patients’ histories, orders, and prescriptions in the future.

- Understand the essence and application of academic discourse
- Recognise different genres of academic writing
- Differentiate between formal and informal register
- Incorporate stylistic elements of academic discourse in their writing
- Develop coherent paragraphs with clear and concise sentences
- Employ techniques used in academic writing to avoid plagiarism
- Use relevant technological tools that assist academic writing

## **2. Course Plan**

### **Introduction to Academic Writing**

#### *2.1 Basics of Academic Writing*

##### **Unit Components**

- Understanding Academic Writing
- Rationale and significance of academic writing
- Genres and style of academic writing

##### **Note:**

At the start of the session, a diagnostic test was conducted to:

- make need-based improvisations to ensure effective implementation of the course;
- Measure students’ progress and course effectiveness after completion of the course.

## Academic Language

### 2.2 Decluttering for Precision and Brevity

#### Unit Components:

- Reducing redundancy and verbosity
- Eliminating unnecessary amplifiers
- Avoiding tautology and long lead-ins
- Correcting misplaced and dangling modifiers

### 2.3 Voice and Verbs

#### Unit Components:

- Understanding and comparing voices
- Recognising the merits of both voices
- Choosing lively and active verbs
- Hedging with verbs
- Ensuring Subject-Verb Agreement

### 2.4 Numbers, Stats, and Abbreviation

#### Unit Components:

- Understanding the conventions for reporting statistics and numbers
- Using abbreviations according to academic conventions
- Learning to edit using *Grammarly*

## 3. Sentence and Paragraph Skills

### 3.1 Understanding Paragraph Development

#### Unit Components:

- Understanding the bases of a paragraph
- Establishing unity and support in paragraphs
- Using cohesive devices for coherence

### 3.2 Session 6: Practicing Sentence Skills

#### Unit Components:

- Perfecting sentences: length, variety, and accuracy
- Rectifying common sentence errors
- Learning to edit using *Grammarly*

## 4. Avoiding Plagiarism

### 4.1 Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Summarizing

#### Unit Components:

- Including short and long quotations
- Using paraphrasing techniques

- Summarising important aspects of academic texts
- Learning to paraphrase using *Wordtune*

## **V. Review and Feedback**

### *4.3 Culminating Session*

#### **Unit Components:**

- Practising Academic writing
- Evaluating progress through a post-test

#### **Before the Pilot Training Course**

The course was planned to keep in view the language needs of the medical students.

#### **Planning the Pilot Course: Identification of the Faculty**

D.I.H.P.E (English Faculty), five English language faculty members were involved in the pilot course. Eight sessions in four weeks started in the month of August 2022. The class duration for each session was based on 1.5 hours. Each of them contributed to the course. All five faculty have expertise in English language teaching. They have been involved in different training and workshops based on academic writing.

#### **Course Structure**

##### **Participants**

The participants of this course were 300 (female and male) students of the Dow Medical College studying in the academic year 2022 at the Dow University of Health sciences. There were heterogeneous students.

##### **Evaluation of the Course**

Generally speaking, the course activities were conducted with an active approach that can foster direct participation, involvement of the participants, and learning by discussion. Various methodologies were used during the classes, such as frontal lessons, brainstorming, exercises, discussions, etc.

##### **Course Outcomes:**

The course was based on the following objectives:

- Understand the essence and application of academic discourse
- Recognise different genres of academic writing
- Differentiate between formal and informal register
- Incorporate stylistic elements of academic discourse in their writing
- Develop coherent paragraphs with clear and concise sentences
- Employ techniques used in academic writing to avoid plagiarism
- Use relevant technological tools that assist academic writing

#### **Results, Critical Factors, and Suggestions for Improvement**

##### **Session 1:**

##### **Teaching Methodologies**

The course and session objectives were introduced through teacher-centered instruction. Later, the genres

and style of academic writing were introduced using instructional scaffolding. The academic writing style was also taught using task-based learning.

### **Observation regarding Participants Involvement and Learning**

Different students participated and were involved at different degrees. Due to the size of the class both physically and spatially. Students seated near the rear of the room appeared to need to be more engaged. However, several of the rear pupils were paying close attention and listening to the instructor. Additionally, the majority of the students had already completed a before-the-session, which included little interaction. It took some time to establish rapport and momentum after that. Activities were included in the final 30 minutes, and the students' participation greatly increased. As the lesson came to a close, a few students approached the instructor because they were curious about the material and wanted to learn more. They even requested advice and help with their writing.

### **Methods or Tools of Assessment**

A pre-test was administered as expected to gauge the pupils' prior knowledge and comprehension of academic writing. The remainder of the session involved assessments via discussion exercises and questions. On a worksheet, students were asked to evaluate the texts for academic writing style. Additionally, they had to convert a non-academic text into an academic one.

### **Critical Thoughts/ Challenges regarding the Implementation of Course**

The strength of the students was the main obstacle. Additionally, the first class looked more difficult because the students needed to learn about the subject or its importance. Even the fact that it. The writing course was unknown to them.

### **Recommendations**

A manageable strength will support task-based learning more effectively. This is crucial for skill-based courses to get the best learning outcomes. We can also ensure that the students are informed of certain crucial course information before the start of sessions so they can arrive at class prepared.

### **Session II:**

#### **Teaching Methodologies**

An inductive approach was used throughout the session. The task-based approach was also utilized for the interaction.

#### **The observation regarding Participant's Involvement and Learning**

Although the kids were engaged in the activities, their energy levels were low as a result of the class schedule. During the session, the majority of the kids enthusiastically participated, but others appeared uninterested. Their level of comprehension and participation was evaluated based on the responses they got in the form of screenshots of their Worksheets. Some students were afraid to share their responses at first, but following encouragement and constructive criticism during the session, they confidently engaged in class. Additionally, other students were inspired to finish the assignments and submit their comments. Some pupils finally requested assistance and criticism for their written pieces.

#### **Methods or Tools of Assessment**

Different tasks were assigned to the students on different techniques of decluttering the text.

### **Critical Thoughts/ Challenges regarding the Implementation of Course**

The biggest challenge was the number of students to teach and interact with during the session. All students could not come within the range of teacher's focus that led to distractions.

## **6. Recommendations**

Student-centered and task-based learning will be more effective if the strength of students can be reduced. Also, an institutionally supported learning management system can better facilitate the teachers and students in sharing the resource material of the course.

### *6.2 SESSIONS III, IV*

#### **Teaching Methodologies**

The teacher-oriented methodology was initially used. Later, as the session progressed, task-based and student-centered approaches were utilized. To maximize students' learning, relevant examples from the medical context were used. Task-based activities and discussions were also used.

#### **The observation regarding Participants' Involvement and Learning**

Because of the rainy weather, students were not in the mood to study. After a while, they settled down. Students in the front rows were engaged as they asked and answered questions. I observed many students taking notes and photos of slides. Toward the end, a few students approached, asking if I could proofread their drafts. They asked for contact information and reference books. The good thing was that the students were quick to learn and familiar with basic English language concepts.

#### **Methods or Tools of Assessment**

Grammarly was supposed to be used for assessment, but there was no internet connection, so instead, I used the task-based activities from the slides. Students were given error correction tasks. Their understanding was also assessed through discussion and questions. Teacher-oriented Instruction & Task-based Approach was used in session III.

### **Critical Thoughts/ Challenges regarding the Implementation of Course**

The major challenge was the strength of the class. With this strength, holding their attention for 90 minutes is difficult. I used proximity control as a classroom management strategy. I walked around the room, solicited responses to increase students' engagement, and gave corrective feedback.

## **7. Recommendations**

There should be at least two sections in MBBS's first year for quality teaching and learning. In addition, it would be better to have the English class during the first half so that the students will be more interested and participate energetically.

### *7.1 SESSION V*

#### **Teaching Methodologies**

Initially, the higher number of students made it hard to keep their attention and engage them in the

lesson, especially those sitting at the back. Later, it shifted from a teacher-centered approach to a task-based technique to teach the students, and the teaching style and approach were modified to account for the larger class size. i.e., walked around the room.

#### **The observation regarding Participants' Involvement and Learning**

After a few slides, pertinent questions were asked to keep the students engaged. It was seen that the students were taking notes and photos of the lecture slides. After the lesson, they were given questions based on writing faults in paragraphs. In conclusion, the cross-questioning technique was also used. After the session ended, students clapped, and a few came to ask for the number and email.

#### **Methods or Tools of Assessment**

It was decided to use a different assessment strategy using Kahoot, but due to an inactive internet connection, Cross questioning techniques and task-based exercises were used.

#### **Critical Thoughts/ Challenges regarding the Implementation of Course**

Overall it was a good session. A diverse teaching strategy helped complete the session with maximum student engagement. Students sitting at the back kept changing seats while entering the class, creating a disturbance in the beginning.

#### **Recommendations**

A stable and reliable internet connection is crucial to applying modern language teaching and learning strategies in language sessions. In addition, the class size should be decreased to at least 100 to 150 pupils, or it can be split into sections. Students need to be aware of the course's importance, implications, applications, demands, and prerequisites for their specific field. As it is crucial, it will motivate them to attend the course with readiness.

### *7.2 SESSIONS VI & VII*

#### **Teaching Methodologies**

The teachers used teacher-centered and task-based approaches.

#### **The observation regarding Participants' Involvement and Learning**

Students' motivation was low; some students, especially those seated in the front rows, were attentive and participative. They captured slides through their phones and even raised their queries.

#### **Methods or Tools of Assessment**

Task-based activities and discussion

#### **Critical Thoughts/ Challenges regarding the Implementation of Course**

The facilitator of this session faced similar challenges as mentioned above.

#### **Recommendations**

The facilitator endorsed all the recommendations listed above.

## **8. Conclusions**

The course is adaptable to the unique needs of the student participants and patient population. It may be modified for any target language and prior participant training level. The discrepancy we observed was



mainly related to the number of students in the class. This course suggested that a formal course tailored for medical students in a class setting of 100 to 150 students is feasible and effective. We administered participant self-assessment surveys pre- and post-course using close-ended questionnaires. The questionnaire mainly inquired about the background knowledge and understanding of the students regarding academic writing.

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