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METHODS OF TEACHING LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

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ACADEMIC WRITING IN ENGLISH AT THE MASTER'S LEVEL: STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES AND CHALLENGES

In the context of the internationalization of higher education in Kazakhstan, academic writing in English has become a key competence for master's students, while a persistent gap remains between institutional expectations and students' actual academic capacities. This study aims to identify and interpret this gap through an analysis of students' perceptions, self-assessments, and academic experiences related to writing in English. The research is grounded in an integrative theoretical framework combining academic literacies, sociocultural, translingual, and genre-based approaches, which conceptualize academic writing as a socially and institutionally mediated practice.

The scientific significance of the study lies in applying an integrative academic literacies framework to the analysis of master's students' experiences in the Kazakhstani context, with particular attention to the interaction of linguistic, discursive, multilingual, and institutional factors shaping perceived academic writing difficulties. The practical significance is associated with improving academic writing instruction through more explicit, context-sensitive, and discipline-oriented pedagogical approaches.

Methodologically, the study is based on a quantitative research design using a questionnaire administered to master's students in Kazakhstan. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean values for Likert-scale items.

The results indicate that students demonstrate confidence in grammatical accuracy and rhetorical awareness, while experiencing difficulties related to disciplinary vocabulary, text organization, genre conventions, and research-based writing. Students tend to perceive their first language as a resource rather than a barrier and emphasize the importance of teacher feedback, interaction, and engagement with academic texts.

The findings suggest that students perceive academic writing difficulties as extending beyond linguistic proficiency alone and involving discursive, research-related, pedagogical, and institutional dimensions. The value of the research lies in highlighting the need to integrate writing instruction with disciplinary knowledge and research practices. The practical implications include improving academic writing courses, strengthening feedback practices, and increasing transparency of academic writing requirements.

Key words: academic writing in English; master's students; academic literacies; academic discourse.

MAIN PROVISIONS

The present study adopts an integrative theoretical framework that conceptualizes academic writing in English as a socially situated, multidimensional, and institutionally mediated practice. Rather than treating writing proficiency primarily as a matter of linguistic accuracy, the framework brings together academic literacies, sociocultural, genre-based, competence-oriented, and multilingual perspectives in order to account for the different factors that shape students' participation in academic discourse.

A central point of departure is the academic literacies perspective, particularly the distinction proposed by M.R. Lea and B.V. Street [1] between study skills, academic socialization, and academic literacies models of student writing. From an academic literacies perspective, writing is not understood simply as a transferable set of technical skills. It is embedded in disciplinary and institutional practices and is shaped by assumptions about what constitutes appropriate knowledge, argumentation, evidence, and academic expression. Academic conventions that appear self-evident to experienced members of an academic community may remain implicit for students who are still learning to participate in that community. The academic literacies approach therefore directs attention not only to what students can or cannot do linguistically, but also to the institutional contexts in which particular forms of writing are expected and evaluated [1; 2].

This perspective is complemented by a sociocultural understanding of writing development. Academic writing competence develops through participation in academic practices and through interaction with teachers, peers, scholarly texts, and research communities. From this standpoint, learning to write academically involves gradual participation in the communicative practices through which disciplinary knowledge is produced and negotiated. Feedback, guided writing practice, engagement with academic texts, and participation in research activities consequently become important elements of academic writing development rather than merely supplementary forms of support.

The genre-based perspective further emphasizes that academic writing is shaped by the communicative purposes and rhetorical expectations of particular discourse communities. Successful academic writing therefore requires more than grammatical correctness. Writers need to understand how arguments are organized, how claims are supported and qualified, how previous research is incorporated, and how relationships with readers are constructed within particular disciplinary contexts. K. Hyland [3] demonstrates that academic discourse is closely connected to disciplinary ways of constructing and communicating knowledge, making genre and disciplinary awareness particularly important for graduate writers. Students may consequently possess adequate general English proficiency while still experiencing difficulty with the rhetorical and discursive conventions expected in research articles, theses, and other academic genres.

Within this framework, academic writing competence comprises several interrelated dimensions. Linguistic competence includes control of academic vocabulary, grammar, and stylistic appropriateness, while discursive competence involves coherence, cohesion, argumentation, and genre awareness. Strategic competence encompasses planning, drafting, revising, editing, self-monitoring, and the effective use of feedback. Academic writing also depends on research and information literacy, including the ability to locate, evaluate, synthesize, and appropriately integrate scholarly sources. These dimensions are closely interconnected because academic writing at the master's level forms part of the broader process of producing and communicating disciplinary knowledge.

The multilingual context of Kazakhstani higher education also requires attention to the linguistic resources that students bring to academic writing. Translingual and multilingual perspectives challenge a simple deficit interpretation of cross-linguistic influence by recognizing that writers may draw strategically on resources developed across different languages [4]. For students working across Kazakh, Russian, and English, previous linguistic and rhetorical experience may therefore contribute to planning, meaning-making, and the development of academic arguments, even

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though these resources must ultimately be negotiated in relation to the conventions of English-medium academic discourse. Research conducted in Kazakhstan similarly indicates that graduate writers develop genre knowledge within the interaction of multiple linguistic and academic traditions and that cross-linguistic transfer forms an important part of their academic experience.

Taken together, these perspectives provide a framework for examining academic writing difficulties without reducing them to insufficient English proficiency. Linguistic competence remains important, but students' experiences are also shaped by disciplinary conventions, opportunities for academic socialization, multilingual resources, instructional practices, feedback, and the extent to which institutional expectations are made explicit. The present study applies this integrative framework to the perceptions and self-reported experiences of master's students in Kazakhstan in order to examine how these dimensions are reflected in their understanding of academic writing and the difficulties they encounter.

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary research, academic writing is increasingly conceptualized as a complex competence that extends beyond purely linguistic skills and includes cognitive, communicative, and methodological components. In the context of higher education, academic writing is viewed as a key element of professional training, particularly for future teachers of foreign languages. As noted by M.B. Bekturova [5], one of the central challenges in developing academic writing competence lies in the insufficient integration of theoretical knowledge and practical writing skills. This gap highlights the need for systematic and methodologically grounded approaches to teaching academic writing.

A similar perspective is presented in the study by A.K. Aryngazin, A.K. Torebekova, and A.A. Aryngazin [6], which emphasizes that students often demonstrate an inadequate level of proficiency not only in academic writing, but also in research planning and scientific methods. This indicates that academic writing competence should be considered as part of a broader research competence, requiring the integration of analytical, methodological, and communicative skills.

Within the Kazakhstani higher education context, the role of academic writing as a university discipline has been examined by Ye.A. Rybalkina [7], who point to challenges in both theoretical justification and practical implementation of academic writing courses, providing possible solutions to improve the teaching of academic texts.

In the study by M.B. Kiseleva [8], academic writing in Russian and English is examined within the paradigm of contemporary higher education, with particular attention given to its role in the development of students' academic and research competencies. It is emphasized that academic writing is regarded as an essential component of academic communication, and the growing importance of integrating bilingual academic writing instruction into university education is highlighted.

Issues related to the assessment of academic writing are addressed by K.A. Melnikova [9], who focuses on evaluating the quality of academic essays in continuous education systems. The study emphasizes the need for clear assessment criteria and standardized approaches to evaluating students' written work.

The competence-based approach to academic writing is reflected in the work of T.S. Putilovskaya [10] who proposes a competence-activity model that integrates writing into broader educational processes. This model underscores the importance of active learning and the development of practical writing skills through meaningful academic tasks. In line with this, Sherekhova [11] highlights the role of academic literacy formation among master's students, particularly in the context of professional communication in a foreign language.

From a multilingual perspective, research by A. Shcherbakov, B. Goodman, and D. Kapashev [12] demonstrates that graduate students in Kazakhstan develop hybrid models of genre knowledge influenced by multiple linguistic and academic traditions. This finding is supported by B. Goodman, S. Kerimkulova, and D.P. Montgomery [13], who emphasize the role of translanguaging and cross-linguistic transfer in shaping students' academic writing practices in English-medium instruction

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environments. These studies suggest that multilingualism should be viewed as a resource rather than a barrier in academic writing development.

Recent research also highlights the growing role of digital technologies and artificial intelligence in academic writing. K. Kotsis [14] discusses both pedagogical opportunities and ethical challenges associated with the use of AI tools such as ChatGPT. While such technologies can support certain aspects of writing, their effectiveness depends on proper pedagogical integration and critical use.

Finally, motivation and cross-cultural factors in academic writing development are examined in the study by I. Dyussekeneva et al. [15], which compares Kazakhstani and American master's students. The findings indicate that motivation plays a significant role in shaping students' engagement with academic writing and their ability to develop necessary competencies.

Thus, academic writing competence is a multidimensional construct that includes linguistic, cognitive, methodological, and sociocultural components. The development of this competence requires an integrative approach that combines effective teaching strategies, institutional support, and consideration of students' multilingual and academic backgrounds.

Although previous studies have highlighted the complexity of academic writing development in Kazakhstan, less attention has been paid to students' own interpretations of academic writing requirements and challenges.

The relevance of the present study is reinforced by ongoing reforms in Kazakhstani higher education, including the expansion of English-medium master's programs, the strengthening of publication-based evaluation systems, and the alignment with global academic standards. Recent research suggests that without explicit pedagogical and institutional mediation, such reforms may intensify the opacity of academic writing expectations and exacerbate inequalities in academic participation.

Although studies have substantially advanced understanding of academic writing in multilingual higher education, further attention is needed to how master's students themselves perceive the relationship between academic writing requirements, their own writing capacities, and the forms of pedagogical and institutional support available to them. This issue is particularly relevant in Kazakhstan, where students may negotiate English-medium academic conventions alongside linguistic and rhetorical resources developed through Kazakh, Russian, and other academic traditions.

The present study does not propose a new conceptualization of academic writing as a socially situated practice; this understanding is well established in international research on academic literacies, disciplinary discourse, and multilingual writing [1; 2; 3; 4]. Instead, the novelty of the study lies in applying and bringing these perspectives together in the analysis of master's students' perceptions and self-reported experiences within the Kazakhstani higher education context. In particular, the study examines how perceived linguistic and discursive difficulties intersect with genre knowledge, multilingual resources, research preparedness, feedback, and institutional support.

The aim of the study is therefore to identify and interpret the gap between academic writing requirements and master's students' perceived capacities through an analysis of their attitudes, reported difficulties, and evaluations of instructional and institutional support. Within this framework, the gap is examined not solely in terms of language proficiency but in relation to the broader linguistic, discursive, pedagogical, and institutional conditions in which academic writing is learned and practised.

The object of the study is academic writing in English in graduate education. The subject of the study is master's students' perceptions, difficulties, and experiences related to academic writing in English.

The study proceeds from the assumption that master's students perceive academic writing difficulties as involving not only linguistic challenges but also discursive, pedagogical, institutional, and sociocultural dimensions.

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To analyze theoretical approaches to academic writing in English within contemporary applied linguistics.

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2. To identify and describe the main difficulties experienced by master's students in academic writing.
3. To examine the factors that hinder and support the development of academic writing skills.
4. To analyze students' perceptions of academic writing requirements and institutional support.
5. To interpret the gap between academic expectations and students' actual competencies.

The theoretical and practical significance of the study lies in its contribution to the development of more effective models of academic writing instruction in higher education. The findings may be used to improve pedagogical approaches, enhance academic writing curricula, and support the integration of writing into disciplinary and research practices at the master's level.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Within the academic literacies tradition, student writing is understood as a socially situated practice rather than as a universal set of transferable language skills. M.R. Lea and B.V. Street [1] distinguish the academic literacies perspective from approaches that conceptualize writing primarily in terms of study skills or students' adaptation to established academic conventions. The academic literacies model instead draws attention to the institutional and disciplinary contexts in which particular forms of writing acquire meaning and authority. T. Lillis and M. Scott [2] further emphasize the epistemological and ideological dimensions of academic literacy practices, including questions concerning whose conventions are recognized and how students gain access to them.

This perspective is particularly relevant to graduate writing because institutional expectations are not always fully explicit. Students may be expected to produce appropriate arguments, use evidence according to disciplinary conventions, position themselves in relation to previous scholarship, and develop an acceptable academic voice without receiving systematic instruction in how these practices operate. Difficulties in academic writing may therefore arise from a mismatch between institutional expectations and students' previous academic experiences rather than from language proficiency alone.

A genre-based perspective provides a complementary account of these difficulties. Academic discourse is not homogeneous: rhetorical practices vary according to genre, discipline, audience, and communicative purpose. As K. Hyland [3] argues, academic writing reflects discipline-specific ways of constructing knowledge and negotiating relationships between writers and readers. Developing academic writing competence consequently involves learning how claims, evidence, argumentation, stance, and textual organization function within particular disciplinary communities.

The multilingual dimension of academic writing is equally important in the Kazakhstani context. Translingual perspectives question models that treat languages as entirely separate systems and cross-linguistic influence primarily as interference. A.S. Canagarajah [4], for example, conceptualizes multilingual writers as drawing strategically on their linguistic repertoires in the process of meaning-making. This perspective does not imply that disciplinary conventions in English become irrelevant; rather, it makes it possible to examine how writers negotiate those conventions using linguistic and rhetorical resources developed through different languages and educational traditions.

Within the Kazakhstani context, recent empirical research increasingly situates academic writing challenges within broader processes of academic socialization and English-medium instruction. Dyussekeneva et al. [15] demonstrate that motivation plays an important role in master's students' engagement with English academic writing and in their willingness to develop academic writing competence.

In studies by Kazakhstani scholars, the issue of academic writing in English is increasingly examined in the context of multilingualism and academic socialization. For example, A. Shcherbakov, B. Goodman, and D. Kapashev demonstrate that master's and doctoral students exhibit hybrid models of genre knowledge shaped by the interaction of Kazakh, Russian, and English academic traditions [12]. Similarly, research by B. Goodman, S. Kerimkulova, and D.P. Montgomery,

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highlights that the transfer of genre and discourse models across languages is systematic in nature and has a significant impact on how learners perceive academic writing requirements [13].

Thus, the present study draws on the concepts of academic literacies, rhetorical and discourse approaches to academic writing, and theories of interlanguage and transnational writing, complemented by empirical research conducted by Kazakhstani scholars. Taken together, these theoretical perspectives make it possible to conceptualize academic writing in English as a socially and institutionally mediated dialogic practice.

In order to empirically examine how master's students perceive the demands of academic writing in English, the difficulties they encounter, and the forms of support they consider important for their development, the study employed an exploratory quantitative survey design. The survey was intended to provide descriptive evidence of students' perceptions and self-assessments rather than to establish causal relationships between linguistic, pedagogical, institutional, or other factors. This distinction is particularly important because the study relies on self-reported data and does not include direct assessment of participants' written performance.

The analytical sample consisted of 40 master's students from universities in Kazakhstan. Participants were recruited through university-based academic and professional networks using convenience sampling. Participation was voluntary. The sample included master's students from different academic backgrounds and universities in Kazakhstan. Because detailed information on university affiliation, discipline, and year of study was not collected systematically for all respondents, these characteristics cannot be reported comprehensively and constitute a limitation of the study. The average age of participants was 23 years. Kazakh and Russian were the principal languages reported in participants' linguistic backgrounds. Half of the participants reported holding an international English-language proficiency certificate, including IELTS (mean score = 6.5), TOEFL (iBT mean score = 80; PBT mean score = 600), or the Duolingo English Test (mean score = 110). These proficiency data were self-reported and were used to characterize the sample rather than as independently verified measures of English-language competence.

The questionnaire was developed by the authors specifically for the purposes of the present study rather than adopted as a standardized instrument. Its content was informed by the multidimensional theoretical framework underlying the study, in which academic writing is approached not only in terms of linguistic proficiency but also in relation to rhetorical and genre awareness, research practices, multilingual resources, and pedagogical and institutional support. Accordingly, the questionnaire included items addressing students' perceptions of academic writing in English, perceived barriers to its development, factors considered important for improving academic writing, and self-assessment of linguistic, academic-writing, and research-related skills. This structure corresponded to the study's objective of examining academic writing as a multidimensional experience rather than as a single decontextualized writing ability. The questionnaire was administered in English through the Qualtrics online survey platform.

Prior to the main data collection, the questionnaire was pilot-tested with six master's students who were not included in the final analytical sample. The pilot focused on the clarity and comprehensibility of the questionnaire items, the appropriateness of the response options, and the overall organization of the instrument. Participants' feedback was used to identify potentially ambiguous formulations and practical difficulties in completing the questionnaire. Minor wording and formatting adjustments were subsequently made before the questionnaire was administered to the main sample. The pilot was intended primarily to improve the clarity and usability of the instrument and should not be interpreted as a full psychometric validation of the questionnaire.

The final questionnaire comprised several thematic groups of items. The first examined students' general perceptions of academic writing in English, including the perceived role of the first language, awareness of purpose and audience, knowledge of academic-writing conventions, and confidence in grammatical accuracy. A second group addressed factors perceived as hindering academic writing, including limitations in general and disciplinary vocabulary, sentence- and paragraph-level writing, organization of ideas and academic texts, understanding of required content, and difficulties associated with the research process. A further group examined factors considered

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important for improving academic writing, including course content and writing tasks, publication experience, interaction in English, teacher support and feedback, access to instructors, online writing tools, AI-based tools, participation in research projects, and engagement with English-language academic sources. Finally, participants evaluated aspects of their academic-writing and research preparedness, including their perceived ability to write for publication, conduct independent research, complete a master's thesis or dissertation, understand expected academic-writing standards, and benefit from formal academic-writing instruction. The current manuscript reports these dimensions in Tables 1-4.

Most attitudinal, difficulty, importance, and self-assessment items were measured using five-point Likert-type scales, with response anchors adapted to the construct being assessed. For example, items concerning perceived difficulty ranged from low to high levels of difficulty, whereas other sections measured agreement, perceived importance, or self-assessed competence. The questionnaire was therefore treated as a set of conceptually related but distinct groups of indicators rather than as a single unidimensional psychometric scale.

The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics appropriate to the exploratory purpose of the study. Means, minimum and maximum values, frequencies, percentages, and valid response counts were used to characterize response patterns. Mean values were retained as summary indicators of general response tendencies, while frequencies and percentages were used to provide a more complete representation of the distribution of responses. Standard deviations were also calculated to indicate the degree of variation around item means. Because the study was designed as an exploratory investigation of students' perceptions rather than as a validation study of a standardized instrument, no overall reliability coefficient was calculated for the questionnaire as a whole. An overall Cronbach's alpha would not be theoretically appropriate because the questionnaire encompasses distinct dimensions of academic-writing experience rather than a single latent construct.

The number of valid responses varied across individual items because some participants did not answer every question. This pattern is already visible in the current results: for example, valid responses in Table 1 range from 37 to 40, while Table 2 contains between 34 and 37 responses per item. Missing responses were treated as item-level missing data and were excluded only from the calculation of the corresponding item; participants were not removed from the analytical sample because of isolated missing responses. The valid *n* is therefore reported for each item to make variation in response numbers transparent.

Given the relatively small and heterogeneous analytical sample, the results are interpreted as exploratory and descriptive. They provide evidence concerning the perceptions and self-assessments of the participating master's students but are not intended to be generalized to the entire population of master's students in Kazakhstan. Similarly, because the study is based on self-reported perceptions, associations observed in the data cannot establish that particular institutional, pedagogical, linguistic, or structural conditions objectively caused the reported academic-writing difficulties. Instead, the findings are used to examine how participants themselves understand and evaluate these dimensions of their academic-writing experience.

RESULTS

The following section presents the results of the survey.

Descriptive statistics reveal patterns in master's students' self-reported perceptions of academic writing in English (Table 1).

Table 1

Master's students' perceptions of academic writing in English

Statement	M	SD	Min	Max	Valid n
My L1 interferes with writing academic papers in English	1.98	1.03	1	4	40

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My L1 helps me write academic texts in English	3.57	1.24	1	5	37
I understand the purpose of my writing	3.97	1.03	2	5	38
I think about my audience when writing	3.95	1.10	1	5	37
I know the conventions of academic writing in English	3.42	1.20	1	5	38
I can usually write grammatically correct sentences in academic English	3.84	1.10	1	5	38

Note**.** Responses were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale. Valid *n* varies because of item-level non-response.

Table 1 presents participants' perceptions of academic writing in English. The results indicate relatively high self-reported awareness of rhetorical purpose (M = 3.97, SD = 1.03) and audience (M = 3.95, SD = 1.10), together with relatively strong confidence in producing grammatically correct academic sentences (M = 3.84, SD = 1.10). Knowledge of English academic-writing conventions received a somewhat lower mean rating (M = 3.42, SD = 1.20).

A particularly notable pattern concerns participants' perceptions of their first language. The statement that L1 interferes with English academic writing received the lowest mean score (M = 1.98, SD = 1.03), with 75.0% of respondents selecting one of the two disagreement categories. In contrast, the statement that L1 helps with academic writing in English received a substantially higher rating (M = 3.57, SD = 1.24), with 73.0% of valid respondents selecting one of the two agreement categories. These results indicate that participants generally perceive their first language as a potential resource rather than primarily as an obstacle to English academic writing.

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for factors perceived by students as hindering academic writing in English.

Table 2

Factors perceived as hindering academic writing in English

Factor	M	SD	Min	Max	Valid n
Limited general English vocabulary	3.72	1.30	1	5	36
Limited disciplinary vocabulary in English	3.68	1.01	2	5	34
Difficulties writing sentences in English	3.11	1.21	1	5	35
Difficulties writing paragraphs in English	3.00	1.13	1	5	34
Difficulty structuring an academic essay	3.09	1.36	1	5	35
Difficulty organizing ideas	3.00	1.26	1	5	35
Lack of understanding of required content	2.83	1.38	1	5	35
Difficulties related to the research process	3.06	1.37	1	5	35

As shown in Table 2, lexical factors were perceived as the most substantial barriers to academic writing. Limited general English vocabulary received the highest mean rating (M = 3.72, SD = 1.30), closely followed by limited disciplinary vocabulary (M = 3.68, SD = 1.01). In response-distribution terms, 61.1% of valid respondents rated limited general vocabulary at levels 4 or 5, while 58.8% did so for disciplinary vocabulary.

Other reported difficulties were more moderate. Sentence-level writing received a mean rating of 3.11 (SD = 1.21), followed by structuring an academic essay (M = 3.09, SD = 1.36) and research-process difficulties (M = 3.06, SD = 1.37). Difficulties with paragraph writing and organization of ideas both had means of 3.00, while lack of understanding of required content received the lowest mean rating (M = 2.83, SD = 1.38). The eight-item group demonstrated good internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$), suggesting that the items capture related dimensions of participants' perceived academic-writing difficulties.

Table 3 presents descriptive statistics for factors that students consider important for improving their academic writing in English.

Table 3

Factors important for improving academic writing in English

Factor	M	SD	Min	Max	Valid n
Course content and writing-related assignments	3.64	0.72	2	5	36
Teacher's personality/supportive attitude	3.88	0.81	2	5	34
Teacher feedback on written work	4.15	0.86	2	5	34
Instructor availability outside class	3.26	0.89	2	5	35
Academic Writing Centers / institutional support	3.23	1.19	1	5	35
Online writing tools	3.54	0.95	1	5	35
AI-based tools such as ChatGPT	3.46	0.98	2	5	35
Participation in research projects	3.57	0.78	2	5	35
Reading academic sources in English	4.14	0.73	3	5	35
Publishing academic papers in English	3.91	0.82	2	5	35
Communication with native speakers of English	4.17	1.01	1	5	35

Table 3 shows that participants attributed particular importance to interpersonal interaction, feedback, and engagement with academic discourse. Communication with native speakers of English received the highest mean rating (M = 4.17, SD = 1.01), closely followed by teacher feedback on written work (M = 4.15, SD = 0.86) and reading academic sources in English (M = 4.14, SD = 0.73). Ratings of 4 or 5 were given by 77.2%, 82.3%, and 80.0% of valid respondents, respectively.

Publishing academic papers in English (M = 3.91, SD = 0.82) and the teacher's supportive attitude (M = 3.88, SD = 0.81) were also rated relatively highly. Participation in research projects (M = 3.57, SD = 0.78), online writing tools (M = 3.54, SD = 0.95), and AI-based tools such as ChatGPT (M = 3.46, SD = 0.98) received moderately positive evaluations. Academic Writing Centers (M = 3.23, SD = 1.19) and instructor availability outside class (M = 3.26, SD = 0.89) received comparatively lower ratings.

Taken together, these descriptive results suggest that participants place greater value on teacher feedback, interaction, academic reading, and authentic participation in scholarly communication than on technological support alone. This pattern should nevertheless be interpreted as reflecting participants' perceived priorities rather than the objectively measured effectiveness of the different forms of support.

Table 4 presents descriptive statistics for students' self-assessments of their academic writing and research preparedness.

Table 4

Self-assessment of academic writing and research preparedness

Statement	M	SD	Min	Max	Valid n
I have sufficient skills to write a paper for publication in English	3.39	1.08	1	5	36
I have sufficient skills to conduct research independently	3.22	1.02	1	5	36
I have the skills to write a master's thesis/dissertation in English	3.00	1.21	1	5	35
I understand the academic-writing standards expected of me	3.51	0.98	1	5	35
Academic-writing courses help me develop skills for my future career	3.80	0.72	2	5	35

The results in Table 4 reveal differences between participants' perceived understanding of academic-writing expectations and their confidence in performing advanced research-writing tasks. The highest mean was observed for the perceived contribution of academic-writing courses to skills relevant to participants' future careers (M = 3.80, SD = 0.72). Participants also reported a relatively positive understanding of the academic-writing standards expected of them (M = 3.51, SD = 0.98), with 60.0% selecting one of the two agreement categories.

Confidence was somewhat lower for writing an English-language paper for publication (M = 3.39, SD = 1.08) and conducting independent research (M = 3.22, SD = 1.02). The lowest mean was

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observed for confidence in writing a master's thesis or dissertation in English (M = 3.00, SD = 1.21), for which only 40.0% of valid respondents selected categories 4 or 5. These results suggest a possible distinction between participants' awareness of academic expectations and their perceived readiness to perform complex research-writing tasks independently. Because the measures are self-reported, however, this pattern should not be interpreted as evidence of participants' actual writing proficiency.

Internal consistency was examined for groups of items that could reasonably be interpreted as addressing related dimensions. The eight items concerning perceived barriers to academic writing demonstrated good internal consistency (Cronbach's α = .86; 34 complete cases). The eleven items concerning factors perceived as important for academic-writing development demonstrated acceptable internal consistency (α = .74; 33 complete cases), while the five-item group concerning academic-writing and research preparedness also demonstrated acceptable internal consistency (α = .75; 35 complete cases). No reliability coefficient is reported for the six general perception items because these items address conceptually distinct aspects of academic-writing experience and were not designed to constitute a unidimensional scale.

Item-level non-response resulted in modest variation in the number of valid observations. In the principal perception block, valid responses ranged from 37 to 40; in the perceived-difficulties block, from 34 to 36; in the academic-writing support block, from 34 to 36; and in the preparedness block, from 35 to 36. Missing responses were treated as item-level missing data and were excluded only from calculations involving the corresponding item. No imputation of missing values was performed, and the valid *n* is reported for each item.

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics appropriate to the exploratory design of the study. For each Likert-type item, the mean (M), standard deviation (SD), minimum and maximum observed values, frequencies, percentages, and number of valid responses (n) were calculated. Frequencies and percentages were additionally examined to avoid relying exclusively on mean scores when interpreting ordinal response distributions. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha for theoretically related multi-item groups. Because the study was exploratory and involved a relatively small, heterogeneous sample, no inferential statistical tests were used and no population-level generalizations were made.

DISCUSSION

The findings suggest that participants perceive their academic writing difficulties as extending beyond linguistic proficiency alone. Although respondents reported relatively high confidence in grammatical accuracy and rhetorical awareness, they also identified challenges related to vocabulary, text organization, research practices, and academic-writing conventions. From an academic literacies perspective, these perceptions can be interpreted in relation to the broader disciplinary and institutional contexts in which academic writing is learned and practised. However, the present survey does not directly measure institutional conditions or establish their causal influence; rather, the academic literacies framework provides a theoretical lens through which the reported experiences can be interpreted.

Lexical difficulties emerged as the most prominent category of perceived challenge, with limited general English vocabulary (M = 3.72) and limited disciplinary vocabulary (M = 3.68) receiving the highest mean ratings. This finding is consistent with research on disciplinary literacy, which conceptualizes academic writing as inseparable from discipline-specific ways of constructing and communicating knowledge. Effective academic writing depends not only on general language proficiency but also on access to the conceptual, rhetorical, and lexical resources valued within particular disciplinary communities. Disciplinary vocabulary reflects underlying epistemic practices rather than isolated lexical items. From this perspective, students' reported lexical difficulties are consistent with the importance of developing access to the linguistic and rhetorical resources used within particular disciplinary communities.

At the same time, the moderate difficulties reported at the sentence, paragraph, and organizational levels suggest that students' challenges are less about surface-level language accuracy

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and more about managing genre and discourse conventions. Genre-based research on academic writing emphasizes that organizing arguments and structuring texts requires familiarity with discipline-specific expectations that are rarely made explicit. These conventions shape how ideas are sequenced, connected, and evaluated within academic texts. Such expectations vary across disciplines and remain largely implicit. These findings are compatible with genre-based accounts emphasizing the importance of making disciplinary conventions explicit, although the present survey did not directly examine the nature or extent of genre instruction received by participants.

The comparatively lower level of difficulty associated with content understanding further supports this interpretation. While students generally feel confident in their subject knowledge, they report difficulties when translating that knowledge into forms of writing that are recognized as academically appropriate. From an academic literacies perspective, this reflects a distinction between knowing disciplinary content and knowing how that knowledge is expected to be represented, argued, and positioned within institutional academic discourse. Students often struggle not with what to say but with how knowledge must be framed to meet academic expectations.

Difficulties related to the research process, such as searching for relevant literature and integrating sources into written texts, further illustrate that academic writing cannot be separated from broader research practices. Research on academic writing emphasizes that writing competence develops through active participation in research-related activities, including evaluating sources, synthesizing previous work, and using citation practices appropriately. These practices are central to constructing disciplinary knowledge and they are often acquired through guided engagement rather than independent practice alone. In this light, students' responses concerning research-related difficulties and the importance they attach to feedback and research participation are consistent with the value of supported engagement in research writing.

The role of the first language offers further insight into how students understand their academic writing development. Rather than perceiving their first language as an obstacle, students tend to view it as a resource that supports thinking, planning, and meaning-making. This perspective resonates with translingual and multilingual approaches to academic writing, which conceptualize writers' linguistic repertoires as dynamic and flexible resources rather than as separate, competing systems. Cross-linguistic practices can play a productive role in academic writing and support pedagogical approaches that recognize and strategically harness cross-linguistic transfer in the development of academic writing.

Students' evaluations of the factors that support academic writing development further highlight the socially mediated nature of writing emphasized in academic literacies research. The strong importance attached to teacher feedback, interaction, and sustained engagement with academic texts points to the central role of dialogic learning environments. Feedback, in particular, emerges as a key space in which institutional expectations are made visible and open to interpretation.

By contrast, the more cautious attitudes toward digital tools and artificial intelligence suggest that students view such technologies as supplementary rather than central to writing development. Recent research similarly shows that while AI-based tools can support surface-level aspects of writing, they cannot replace expert feedback or disciplinary enculturation [10]. This highlights the continued importance of human-mediated pedagogical support.

Finally, students' limited confidence in advanced academic writing tasks, such as writing for publication or completing extended research projects, points to a gap between awareness of standards and the ability to enact them. From an academic literacies standpoint, such tasks represent threshold practices that require sustained mentoring and progressive academic socialization. Students' responses indicate that they attach considerable importance to these forms of support, suggesting that sustained mentoring and participation in research-related writing may warrant particular attention in graduate academic-writing instruction.

Taken together, the findings suggest that the participating students perceive their academic writing difficulties as extending beyond linguistic proficiency alone. Their responses point to an interplay of lexical, discursive, research-related, pedagogical, and institutional dimensions of academic writing. This interpretation is consistent with the academic literacies framework, which

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conceptualizes academic writing as a socially situated practice embedded within disciplinary conventions and institutional expectations. However, because the present study is based on self-reported perceptions, the findings should not be interpreted as demonstrating that structural or institutional factors cause the reported difficulties.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how master's students in Kazakhstan perceive academic writing in English and how they evaluate their own capacities in relation to institutional expectations. Rather than treating academic writing as a purely linguistic skill, the study approached it as a practice shaped by disciplinary norms, educational experience, and patterns of academic socialization. The findings suggest that participants perceive their academic writing difficulties as extending beyond language proficiency alone and involving disciplinary, research-related, pedagogical, and institutional dimensions.

Overall, the results show that students tend to feel relatively confident about their general language abilities and certain rhetorical aspects of writing, such as understanding the purpose of a text or considering its audience. At the same time, they report ongoing challenges related to disciplinary vocabulary, text organization, genre conventions, and research-based writing. This contrast suggests that surface-level competence does not necessarily translate into confidence or effectiveness when students are expected to produce extended academic texts that conform to disciplinary expectations. In this sense, academic writing emerges not as a single skill to be mastered, but as a complex practice that develops unevenly and depends heavily on context.

One of the more revealing findings concerns students' attitudes toward their first language. Most respondents did not see their L1 as an obstacle to writing in English; instead, they tended to view it as a resource that supports thinking, planning, and meaning-making. This perception challenges deficit-based assumptions that continue to shape many institutional approaches to academic writing in English. This perception is consistent with multilingual and translingual perspectives that regard students' linguistic repertoires as potential resources for meaning-making rather than simply as sources of interference. The finding suggests that future research could examine more directly how multilingual resources are recognized and used in academic writing instruction in Kazakhstan.

The findings also point to a noticeable gap between students' awareness of academic writing standards and their confidence in meeting them independently. While respondents generally reported that they understand what is expected of them, they were far less certain about their ability to write for publication or complete extended research projects such as a master's thesis. This gap indicates that knowing the standards does not automatically lead to being able to apply them in practice. Developing this ability appears to require sustained engagement with academic writing tasks, opportunities for feedback, and gradual participation in research-related writing activities.

Students' evaluations of factors that support academic writing development further highlight the social nature of writing. Teacher feedback, interaction, and regular exposure to academic texts were consistently rated as the most important forms of support. These results suggest that academic writing develops most effectively in dialogic environments where expectations are clarified and negotiated rather than simply imposed. By contrast, digital tools and AI-based resources were seen as helpful but secondary. Students appear to value them mainly as supplementary aids rather than as substitutes for instruction, feedback, or mentoring.

Taken together, the findings suggest that the participating students perceive academic writing difficulties as multidimensional rather than exclusively linguistic. Their responses point to the relevance of disciplinary conventions, research practices, feedback, academic socialization, and pedagogical support alongside linguistic competence. These findings are consistent with an academic literacies perspective, but the self-reported nature of the data does not allow causal conclusions about the relative influence of institutional, pedagogical, or linguistic factors. The study contributes to

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existing research by foregrounding students' own perspectives on academic writing in English and situating these perspectives within the broader context of higher education in Kazakhstan.

The practical implications of the findings are clear. Academic writing instruction at the master's level needs to be more closely connected to disciplinary content and research activity. Writing courses should move beyond general language training and address genre-specific conventions, argumentation patterns, and research-based writing practices relevant to students' fields of study. Feedback should be treated not merely as correction, but as a key pedagogical space where academic norms are made visible and accessible. In addition, recognizing students' multilingual resources may help create more inclusive and effective approaches to academic writing development.

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the analytical sample consisted of only 40 master's students and was heterogeneous in terms of participants' academic and linguistic backgrounds. The findings should therefore be regarded as exploratory and should not be generalized to the broader population of master's students in Kazakhstan. Second, the study relies exclusively on self-reported perceptions and self-assessments rather than direct measures of academic writing performance. Consequently, the results cannot establish causal relationships between students' reported difficulties and particular linguistic, pedagogical, or institutional conditions. Third, item-level non-response resulted in modest variation in the number of valid responses across questionnaire items. Finally, although the author-developed questionnaire was pilot-tested for clarity and usability and internal consistency was examined for theoretically coherent item groups, further validation with larger and more diverse samples would strengthen the instrument. Future research should combine survey data with analysis of student writing, interviews, institutional data, and comparative or longitudinal designs across universities and disciplines.

In conclusion, the study shows that academic writing in English at the master's level is best understood as a socially situated practice that develops through interaction, guidance, and participation in academic communities. Addressing the gap between institutional expectations and students' capacities requires not only changes in teaching methods, but also greater transparency in academic writing requirements and stronger integration of writing into research and disciplinary learning. Without such changes, academic writing is likely to remain a source of uncertainty rather than a meaningful tool for academic development.

ИНФОРМАЦИЯ О ФИНАНСИРОВАНИИ

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Магистратура деңгейіндегі ағылшын тіліндегі академиялық жазылым: білім алушылардың көзқарастары мен қиындықтары

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Қазақстандағы жоғары білім беру жүйесінің интернационалдануы жағдайында ағылшын тіліндегі академиялық жазылым магистранттардың негізгі құзыреттерінің біріне

айналуда, алайда институционалдық талаптар мен студенттердің нақты академиялық мүмкіндіктері арасында тұрақты алшақтық сақталуда. Зерттеудің мақсаты – ағылшын тілінде жазуға қатысты магистранттардың көзқарастарын, өзін-өзі бағалауын және академиялық тәжірибесін талдау негізінде осы алшақтықты анықтау және түсіндіру. Зерттеу академиялық сауаттылық, социомәдени, транслингвальды және жанрлық тәсілдерді біріктіретін интегративті теориялық негізге сүйенеді, оның аясында академиялық жазылым әлеуметтік және институционалдық шартталған тәжірибе ретінде қарастырылады.

Зерттеудің ғылыми маңыздылығы академиялық жазудағы қиындықтарды жеке тілдік кемшіліктер ретінде емес, лингвистикалық, дискурстық және институционалдық факторлардың өзара әрекеттесуінің нәтижесі ретінде қайта пайымдауда көрінеді. Практикалық маңыздылығы академиялық жазуды оқыту үдерісін негұрлым айқын, контекстке бейімделген және пәндік ерекшеліктерді ескеретін педагогикалық тәсілдер арқылы жетілдіру мүмкіндігімен байланысты.

Әдіснамалық тұрғыдан зерттеу Қазақстандағы магистранттар арасында жүргізілген сауалнамаға негізделген сандық зерттеу дизайнына сүйенеді. Мәліметтер Лайкерт шкаласы бойынша орташа мәндерді есептеуді қоса алғанда, сипаттамалық статистика әдістері арқылы өңделді.

Зерттеу нәтижелері студенттердің грамматикалық дұрыстық пен риторикалық хабардарлық тұрғысынан өзін сенімді бағалайтынын, алайда пәндік лексика, мәтінді ұйымдастыру, жанрлық нормалар және зерттеушілік жазылымға қатысты қиындықтарға тап болатынын көрсетті. Сонымен қатар, студенттер ана тілін кедергі емес, керісінше ресурс ретінде қабылдайды, ал академиялық жазу дағдыларын дамытуда оқытушының кері байланысы, өзара әрекеттесу және академиялық дереккөздермен жұмыс негізгі факторлар ретінде айқындалды.

Зерттеу қорытындысы бойынша академиялық жазудағы қиындықтар негізінен институционалдық және педагогикалық факторлармен айқындалады. Зерттеудің құндылығы жазылымды оқытуды пәндік мазмұнмен және зерттеу тәжірибесімен ықпалдастыру қажеттілігін негіздеуде көрінеді. Практикалық маңыздылығы академиялық жазу курстарын жетілдіруде, кері байланыс жүйесін нығайтуда және академиялық талаптардың айқындығын арттыруда көрініс табады.

*Кілт сөздер**:** ағылшын тіліндегі академиялық жазылым; магистранттар; академиялық сауаттылық; академиялық дискурс.*

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Академическое письмо на английском языке в магистратуре: взгляды обучающихся и трудности

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В условиях интернационализации высшего образования в Казахстане академическое письмо на английском языке становится ключевой компетенцией магистрантов, при этом сохраняется устойчивый разрыв между институциональными требованиями и фактическими академическими возможностями студентов. Целью данного исследования является выявление и интерпретация данного разрыва на основе анализа представлений студентов, их самооценок и академического опыта, связанного с письмом на английском языке. Исследование опирается на интегративную теоретическую рамку, объединяющую подходы академической грамотности, социокультурные, транслингвальные и жанрово-ориентированные концепции, в рамках которых академическое письмо рассматривается как социально и институционально обусловленная практика.

Научная значимость исследования заключается в переосмыслении трудностей академического письма как результата взаимодействия лингвистических, дискурсивных и

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институциональных факторов, а не как проявления индивидуальных дефицитов. Практическая значимость связана с возможностью совершенствования преподавания академического письма за счет внедрения более эксплицитных, контекстуально ориентированных и дисциплинарно обусловленных педагогических подходов.

Методологически исследование основано на количественном дизайне с использованием анкетирования магистрантов в Казахстане. Обработка данных осуществлялась с применением методов описательной статистики, включая расчет средних значений по шкале Лайкерта.

Результаты показывают, что студенты демонстрируют уверенность в грамматической корректности и риторической осведомленности, однако испытывают трудности, связанные с дисциплинарной лексикой, организацией текста, жанровыми конвенциями и исследовательским письмом. При этом первый язык воспринимается ими скорее как ресурс, чем как барьер, а ключевыми факторами развития письменных навыков выступают обратная связь преподавателя, взаимодействие и работа с академическими источниками.

Сделан вывод о том, что трудности академического письма обусловлены преимущественно институциональными и педагогическими факторами. Ценность исследования заключается в обосновании необходимости интеграции обучения письму с дисциплинарным содержанием и исследовательской практикой. Практическая значимость состоит в совершенствовании курсов академического письма, усилении практик обратной связи и повышении прозрачности академических требований.

Ключевые слова: академическое письмо на английском языке; магистранты; академическая грамотность; академический дискурс.

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DIDACTICS IN THE WORKS OF AHMET BAITURSYNULY AND MYRZA ALIAKPER TAIRZADE (SABIR)

The article examines selected didactic works by the Kazakh scholar, linguist, educator, and poet Ahmet Baitursynuly and the Azerbaijani poet, satirist, and educator Myrza Aliakper Tairzade (Sabir). The study focuses on the ways in which didactic poetry functions as a means of enlightenment, moral instruction, national awakening, and social criticism. A comparative qualitative analysis is conducted of selected works representing the authors' major thematic and artistic strategies. The analysis considers didactic strategies, imagery, stylistic devices, forms of social criticism, intended addressees, and the relationship between literary and pedagogical purposes. The findings demonstrate that both authors use poetry to challenge ignorance, social injustice, passivity, and moral decline, while their artistic strategies differ. Baitursynuly relies predominantly on allegory, metaphor, moral exhortation, rhetorical questions, and educational appeals, whereas Sabir makes more extensive use of satire, irony, social types, and grotesque characterization. Despite these differences, both writers connect individual moral improvement with the broader well-being of the nation. The study contributes to comparative research on Kazakh and Azerbaijani literature by demonstrating how didactic poetry in the early twentieth-century Turkic literary context served simultaneously aesthetic, educational, civic, and socially critical functions.

Key words: Ahmet Baitursynuly; Myrza Aliakper Tairzade (Sabir); didactics; educator; Azerbaijani literature; Kazakh literature; comparative literature; enlightenment.