

Challenges of Writing Research Articles in English for University-Level EFL Teachers

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Abstract

Writing research articles in English is a challenging task for non-native speakers of English, as it requires linguistic competence, rhetorical awareness, disciplinary knowledge, and familiarity with the research writing conventions. The qualitative study explores English non-native speakers' challenges while writing research articles (RAs) in English. The participants were 12 university-level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers selected using snowball sampling. The data was collected using semi-structured interviews and analyzed using a thematic approach. The findings revealed four challenges: linguistic, rhetorical, disciplinary, and cultural. Linguistic challenges affect the clarity and credibility of the writing. In contrast, rhetorical challenges involve following the conventions, arguments, and citations of RAs in English. Disciplinary challenges require adapting to the norms and practices of different fields of study, and cultural challenges reflect the preferences for directness, formality, and objectivity in writing. The study shows the complexity and interrelatedness of these challenges and suggests a flexible and nuanced approach to overcome them.

Keywords: academic writing challenges; non-native English speakers; linguistic and rhetorical issues; disciplinary adaptability; cultural sensitivity

Introduction*

Research Article (RA) is the main genre of academic communication and the primary means of disseminating research findings to the scholarly community (Hyland, 2004). Writing Research Articles (RAs) in English is an important skill for university-level EFL teachers

as it enables them to share their research with a wider and more diverse audience, increase their visibility and impact in their field, and enhance their professional development and career prospects (Canagarajah, 2002; Clark & Paulsen, 2016; Judge et al., 2007). However, writing RAs in English is not a straightforward task as it involves various linguistic, rhetorical, disciplinary, and cultural aspects that need to be considered and mastered by the writers (Belcher, 2007; Flowerdew, 2012; Tenzer & Pudelko, 2017). Previous research has identified some of the common challenges that non-native speakers of English face when writing RAs in English, such as finding a suitable topic,

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conducting a literature review, organizing the structure, using appropriate language, and dealing with journal editors and reviewers (Horn, 2017).

Writing research articles in English poses various challenges for university-level EFL researchers. One of the major challenges is related to language proficiency, which affects the clarity and effectiveness of communication (Belcher, 2007). Language proficiency is the ability to use a language effectively and appropriately for different purposes and contexts (Flowerdew, 2000). It includes various aspects such as vocabulary, grammar, syntax, style, and discourse. Language proficiency affects the clarity and effectiveness of communication, which are essential for conveying the research findings and arguments to the intended audience (Da, 2016). Therefore, EFL researchers must improve their language proficiency to produce high-quality research articles in English. Another challenge university-level EFL teachers face when writing research articles in English is organizing their thoughts and ideas logically (Canagarajah, 2002). Creating a clear and coherent flow of information and arguments throughout the article is important, enhancing the research's readability and persuasiveness (Connor, 2004). To overcome this challenge, researchers need to plan and structure their articles carefully before they start writing. One way to do this is to outline the main points and subpoints they want to cover in each article section. Another way is to follow the conventions and expectations

Gosden (2003) also stated that writing RAs in English is one of the most obvious challenges

of their discipline and the journal they submit. For example, most research articles have a standard structure that consists of an abstract, an introduction, a literature review, a methodology, results, a discussion, and a conclusion section. Each section has a specific purpose and content that the researcher needs to follow. By following these steps, researchers can ensure that their article is well-organized and easy to follow. One of the challenges that university-level EFL teachers face is the influence of their cultural backgrounds on their writing conventions (J. Swales & Feak, 2012). Different cultures have different norms and expectations for academic writing, which may not align with the Western standards that most journals follow. One of the areas where cultural differences can cause problems is citation practices (Swales, 2004). Citation practices are crucial in research writing, as they demonstrate the credibility and originality of the research. However, citation norms vary across cultures, and non-native English speakers may not be familiar with the rules and conventions of their citation style (Curry & Lillis, 2004). For example, some cultures may prefer indirect citation, where the source is mentioned only once at the beginning or the end of a paragraph. In contrast, others may prefer direct citation, where the source is mentioned whenever a specific idea or information is used. To avoid confusion and inconsistency, researchers need to learn and follow the citation style and format that their journal requires.

non-native speakers face in the academic world. Non-native English speakers often

struggle with grammatical complexities, intricate sentence structures, and the usage of academic vocabulary, which affect the clarity and coherence of their writing (Hyland, 2016). These language difficulties become evident when they try to communicate complex research findings or arguments effectively. Consequently, many Nepali scholars worry about whether their writing meets the high linguistic standards required in international academic discourse. This worry is justified, as previous research has shown that non-native English speakers encounter disadvantages and discrimination in publishing and disseminating their research due to language barriers (Belcher, 2007; Flowerdew, 2000). Furthermore, non-native English speakers may face challenges providing clear and constructive feedback to other researchers as reviewers (Whang, 2020). Therefore, it is vital for non-native English speakers to improve their proficiency and confidence in academic English writing and to seek appropriate support services when needed.

In addition to the grammar, vocabulary, and structure challenges, university-level EFL teachers in Nepal may also face difficulties in mastering the specialized academic language skills required for research writing (Hyland, 2016). Academic language skills include academic style, discourse markers, and the ability to construct cohesive and logically structured arguments. These skills are essential for producing clear, concise, and coherent texts that effectively communicate the research findings and implications to the intended audience (Azizah & Budiman, 2022). However, university-level EFL teachers in Nepal may lack adequate exposure and practice in using these

skills, as they may have learned English mostly through informal or conversational settings. As a result, their research articles may not meet the high linguistic standards expected in international academic discourse. They may appear less sophisticated and precise than those written by native English-speaking scholars (Flowerdew, 2012). Therefore, university-level EFL teachers in Nepal must develop their academic language skills through various means, such as reading extensively, attending workshops, seeking feedback, and using online resources.

Another challenge that university-level EFL teachers in Nepal face when writing research papers is navigating the intricate structure of a research paper. A research paper is a piece of academic writing that provides analysis, interpretation, and argument based on in-depth independent research. Research papers typically follow a standard format, consisting of several sections that convey specific information about the research study. These sections include an introduction, literature review, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusion (Tiwari, 2019). Ensuring these sections are present and organized coherently and logically is a formidable challenge for many non-native English speakers. The language barrier makes it even more challenging to properly integrate one's research findings into this framework while maintaining the flow of ideas. Moreover, different disciplines and journals may have different expectations and preferences regarding the structure and style of a research paper. Therefore, university-level EFL teachers in Nepal must be familiar with the conventions and requirements of their specific

fields and target journals when writing research papers.

Another challenge university-level EFL teachers in Nepal face when writing research papers is effective source citation and referencing. Citation and referencing are essential skills in academic writing, as they serve multiple functions, such as acknowledging intellectual debts, providing evidence to support claims, and enabling readers to locate cited works (Al Fadda, 2012). However, university-level EFL teachers in Nepal may struggle to grasp the intricacies of various citation styles (e.g., APA, MLA, and Chicago) and the specific formatting requirements of different journals. Inaccurate or inconsistent citations can lead to rejection or revision requests from journal editors (Gosden, 2003). Therefore, university-level EFL teachers in Nepal must familiarize themselves with the conventions and rules of citation and referencing in their fields target journals, and use reliable tools and resources to help them cite and reference correctly.

Despite the extensive literature on the challenges of writing RAs in English, most studies have focused on common challenges EFL researchers face across disciplines, fields, and genres. However, writing RAs in English is not a homogeneous or monolithic activity (Hyland & Milton, 1997; Petrić, 2007). It varies across disciplines, fields, and genres, depending on the research's nature, purpose, and audience. Different disciplines, fields, and genres have different conventions, expectations, and standards for research writing, which may affect how researchers approach, structure,

and present their research. For example, some disciplines may emphasize using quantitative methods and data. In contrast, others may prefer qualitative or mixed methods and data. Some fields may require a more theoretical or conceptual framework. In contrast, others may focus more on the practical or empirical implications of the research. Some genres may have a more rigid or fixed structure. In contrast, others may allow more flexibility or creativity in the article's organization. These differences may pose additional challenges for EFL researchers unfamiliar with the norms and practices of their target discipline, field, or genre. Therefore, to gain a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the challenges of writing RAs in English, it is necessary to explore the challenges from the perspectives of EFL researchers in different disciplines, fields, and genres. However, most existing studies on this topic have adopted a quantitative or mixed-methods approach, which may not capture the EFL researchers' rich and complex experiences and perceptions. Moreover, most studies have focused on a single discipline, field, or genre, which may not reflect the diversity and variability of research writing in English. Therefore, there is a need for more qualitative and holistic studies that explore the challenges of writing RAs in English from the voices of EFL researchers across different disciplines, fields, and genres.

This study attempts to fill this gap by investigating the challenges faced by university-level EFL teachers in writing RAs in English. University-level EFL teachers were

chosen as the participants because they are consumers and producers of research, and they need to communicate their research effectively and appropriately to the global academic community. Thus, the objective that guided this study was to explore the main challenges that university-level EFL teachers face when writing RAs in English.

Method

Design

The researcher adopted an interpretive paradigm, a phenomenological design, and a qualitative approach to address this topic. These choices were best suited for the research purpose, question, and context, as they enabled the researcher to understand and interpret the subjective meanings and experiences of the participants, to describe and analyze the essence and structure of the phenomenon, and to collect and analyze data in a naturalistic and flexible manner, using methods that were sensitive to the context and the participants' voices (Creswell, 2023; Ponterotto & Grieger, 2007; Smith & Osborn, 2004)

Participants

This study involved 12 university-level EFL teachers teaching English Education at constituent campuses under the Faculty of Education at Tribhuvan University (TU), Nepal. The researcher selected the participants through snowball sampling. This technique relies on referrals from initial participants to generate additional ones.

The researcher selected the participants based on three criteria related to their academic background and performance.

First, they had to teach English Education at a constituent campus under the Faculty of Education (FoE), TU. Second, they had to have published at least four research articles (RAs), two in national journals and two in international peer-reviewed journals. Third, they had to be actively involved in writing more research articles at the time of the study. These criteria ensured that the participants had sufficient experience and expertise in research writing in English. To initiate the sampling process, the researcher emailed one of his acquaintances who met the criteria and requested him to participate in the study. After obtaining his consent, the researcher requested that he refer two more potential participants who also met the criteria. He then contacted them via email and asked for their consent. He repeated this procedure until he reached the desired number of participants. The participants were asked to provide informed consent and demographic information. The participants had diverse academic backgrounds. Nepali was their native language, and English was their second or foreign language. They had different levels of experience and proficiency in RA writing in English.

Instrument

The researcher used a semi-structured interview technique to collect the data. The interview questions covered the challenges faced in the linguistic, rhetorical, disciplinary, and cultural aspects of RA writing. The data collection spanned over three months, from April to July 2023. The interviews were conducted online and lasted an average of 18 minutes each. The researcher audio-recorded the interviews with the permission of the

participants. The interviews were conducted in Nepali, transcribed verbatim in Nepali, and then translated into English. The researcher sent

Data Analysis

The researcher analyzed the data using thematic analysis. This method identifies, analyzes, and reports patterns or themes within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The data analysis involved five phases: familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. The researcher derived the codes and themes from an inductive (based on the data) approach. He reviewed and refined the codes and themes for validity and reliability with the help of a peer researcher. He presented the final themes as study findings with illustrative participant quotes.

Limitations

The research has some limitations that the readers should consider. The findings are subjective and may not generalize to other contexts or populations due to the interpretive paradigm, the phenomenological design, and the qualitative approach. The snowball sampling may introduce bias or lack of diversity in the sample, as the researcher used colleague referrals. Interviews were conducted online, which may limit the quality of the data and miss some aspects of the phenomenon, such as non-verbal cues or contextual factors. Data, i.e., verbatim transcriptions, were translated into English. The data translation may pose challenges in accuracy, consistency, and meaning. The thematic analysis the researcher used to analyze the data may not account for

other interpretations or representations of the data.

Ethical Consideration

The study followed the ethical principles of respect, beneficence, justice, and integrity in conducting qualitative research (Orb et al., 2001). The participants voluntarily agreed to participate in the study without coercion or inducement. They were informed about the study's purpose, procedure, benefits, and risks. The study protected the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants by using pseudonyms and removing any identifying information from the data. The study acknowledged all the limitations, biases, or conflicts of interest that could affect the research's credibility.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

Linguistic Challenge

The participants shared their views on the linguistic problems they faced when writing research articles in English. They stated they had difficulties with vocabulary, grammar, word order, tense and aspect, coherence, and cohesion. They noted that these problems affected the clarity, accuracy, and credibility of their writing and sometimes led to misunderstanding or rejection by the readers or editors. They explained that they lacked the appropriate vocabulary to express their ideas precisely and concisely. They also admitted that they made grammatical mistakes that violated the rules of academic English. They mentioned that they had problems with word order that made their sentences confusing or unnatural.

They acknowledged that they had errors with tense and aspect that made their time references inconsistent or inaccurate. They also said they had trouble with coherence and cohesion, making their arguments unclear or illogical. They emphasized that these linguistic problems were a major challenge for them when writing research articles in English. For example, one participant said:

I have difficulty finding the right words to express my ideas. Sometimes I use Nepali words and translate them into English, but they may not be appropriate or accurate. I also make grammatical errors, especially with verb tenses and articles. I do not have enough practice in writing academic English, and I do not have anyone to check or correct my writing. (P5)

They stated that several factors influenced these challenges. They reported limited exposure to academic English due to Nepal's low literacy and education quality. They observed that the education system in Nepal was often outdated, inefficient, and unequal. They admitted that teaching and learning English in Nepal was also problematic due to insufficient qualified teachers, inadequate resources, and ineffective methods. They said these problems prevented them from developing their linguistic competence and confidence in English, especially in academic writing. They further acknowledged that their support for learning English was also limited due to their restricted access to and participation in the global academic community. They described Nepal as a landlocked and mountainous country that faced various challenges, such as poverty,

inequality, instability, corruption, and natural disasters. They emphasized that these challenges affected the development and quality of research and education in Nepal and hindered communication and collaboration with other scholars and institutions worldwide. They suggested that they did not have enough feedback and guidance from native speakers or cross-cultural peers who could help them improve and correct their linguistic problems. They also noted that they transferred some linguistic features from their other languages into their English academic writing due to the potential interference from their first or other languages. These transferred features encompassed word order, tense and aspect, articles, prepositions, modality, lexical choices, and idiomatic expressions. They observed that these linguistic problems and transferred features might not match the norms and expectations of academic English, which could lead to confusion or misinterpretation by both native speakers and other non-native speakers. They emphasized that these linguistic challenges affected the clarity, accuracy, and credibility of their writing and sometimes led to misunderstanding or rejection by the readers or editors. The following excerpt of P9 exemplifies this issue.

Yes, many of us tend to transfer linguistic features from our other languages into our English academic writing. This can lead to interference from our first language or other languages, affecting aspects like word order, tense, aspect, articles, prepositions, modality, lexical choices, and idiomatic expressions. (P9)

This study has explored the linguistic challenges university-level EFL teachers face

when writing research articles in English. The study found that the participants had difficulties with vocabulary, grammar, word order, tense and aspect, and coherence and cohesion, which affected the clarity, accuracy, and credibility of their writing. The study has also identified some specific factors that influenced the linguistic challenges of the participants, such as the low level of literacy and education quality in Nepal, the restricted access to and participation in the global academic community, and the potential interference from their first language or other languages. The study has implications for improving the teaching and learning of academic writing for non-native English speakers in Nepal and other similar contexts.

Rhetorical Challenge

The second theme from the data was the rhetorical challenges that university-level EFL teachers encountered when writing RAs in English. The participants reported various difficulties in organizing and presenting their ideas and arguments logically and persuasively in a way that conformed to the conventions and expectations of the genre and the audience. The participants struggled with rhetorical features such as the structure, style, tone, voice, citation, and argumentation of academic writing. They were not familiar with the genre conventions of RAs, such as the IMRAD structure (Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion). They had difficulty establishing their authorial stance and voice. They also had problems with citation and plagiarism due to ignorance or negligence. For example, one participant said:

I am unsure about what to include or exclude in each section. I struggle with writing a good introduction and a good conclusion. I find it hard to make my arguments clear and convincing. I need guidance on how to cite my sources correctly and avoid plagiarism. I want to show my voice and position in my writing. (P10)

The participants shared their views on the rhetorical challenges they faced when writing research articles in English as non-native speakers in Nepal. They stated that these challenges were influenced by several factors, such as the writer's purpose and audience, the discipline and genre of the research article, the conventions and expectations of academic English, and the writer's cultural background and personal preferences. They also observed differences between how non-native speakers and native speakers used rhetorical patterns and strategies in their research articles, involving variations in the structure, problem-solution patterns, hedging and boosting devices, citation practices, and genre-specific features. They emphasized that these different rhetorical approaches might not match the established norms and expectations of academic English, which could lead to confusion or misinterpretation by both native speakers and other non-native speakers who read their articles. One of the main reasons for these rhetorical challenges was Nepal's diverse cultural background, which influenced how Nepalese thought and communicated. They noted that various religions and neighboring countries influenced Nepali culture and that it valued collectivism, harmony, hierarchy, indirectness, and politeness over individualism,

conflict, equality, directness, and assertiveness. They said that these cultural values affected their rhetorical choices when they wrote research articles in English, such as avoiding stating their claims or opinions explicitly or strongly, respecting the authority or seniority of other scholars or reviewers, using more personal pronouns or passive voice, using more examples or anecdotes, or using more emotional or expressive language. Another reason for the rhetorical challenges was the limited access to and participation in the global academic community due to Nepal's geographical, political, and economic constraints. They reported that these constraints affected the development and quality of research and education in Nepal and hindered communication and collaboration with other scholars and institutions worldwide. They said that they might not have enough exposure to and feedback from academic English and might not be familiar with the current trends and standards of research publication. They also said they might struggle to identify their purpose and audience for their research articles in English and adapt their rhetorical choices accordingly. Regarding this issue, one of the participants stated:

We have observed differences in how non-native speakers and native speakers use rhetorical devices like the structure of their articles, problem-solution patterns, hedging and boosting, citation practices, and genre-specific features. These differences can sometimes lead to misunderstandings. (P12)

This study explored the rhetorical challenges university-level EFL teachers in Nepal face when writing research articles in

English as a second language. The findings revealed that the participants struggled to organize and present their ideas and arguments effectively and appropriately under the genre conventions and audience expectations of academic English. The study also identified some factors that influenced these rhetorical challenges, such as the cultural background of the writers, the limited exposure to and feedback from academic English, and the diverse purposes and audiences of their research articles. The study suggests that university-level EFL teachers in Nepal need more guidance and support in developing their rhetorical awareness and skills for writing research articles in English. The study also contributes to the literature on academic writing in English as a second language by providing insights into non-native speakers' rhetorical challenges and strategies from a specific context and discipline.

Disciplinary Challenge

The participants stated that they faced disciplinary challenges when writing RAs in English. This challenge refers to the difficulty of understanding and applying the specific knowledge and methods of a given discipline or field of study. They explained that different disciplines have different conventions and expectations for writing RAs, such as structure, style, tone, citation, and terminology. They also mentioned that they needed to be familiar with their target audience's disciplinary norms and practices and journal and adjust their writing accordingly. However, they reported that this was not easy, as disciplinary norms and practices were often implicit and varied across disciplines and even sub-disciplines. Moreover,

they said that some disciplines had more rigid and standardized requirements than others, which limited their creativity and flexibility as non-native writers. The following statement reflects the view of one of the participants on this issue:

Different disciplines have their unique conventions and expectations for research articles. This includes everything from the structure, style, and tone to citation practices and specialized terminology. We need to be familiar in these disciplinary norms to effectively communicate our research. (P2)

The participants reported that writing research articles in different disciplines was not easy and required a careful and flexible approach. They said they had to consider many factors when writing their articles. The first factor was the writer's purpose and the intended audience. They had to write in a way that suited the readers they wanted to reach, whether they were experts or not. They had to use the right language, tone, and detail for their audience. They also had to tailor their research article to meet the specific needs and expectations of the target readership. The second factor was the discipline and genre of the research article. They had to follow the rules and preferences of their field, such as how to structure, argue, and support their research. They had to learn the conventions of their field and write articles that fit in with the community. They also had to be aware of the unique characteristics of each academic field, which may have distinct preferences regarding structure, argumentation style, and evidentiary support. The third factor was the academic English conventions and how they changed

over time. They had to keep up with the current academic English expectations and standards, which could differ for different fields, sub-fields, journals, and reviewers. They had to be flexible and adapt their writing practices to these changes. They also had to acknowledge the dynamic nature of academic English conventions and the need to adjust to them. The fourth factor was the personal preferences of the writers. While adhering to disciplinary norms is crucial, they also noted that writers should acknowledge their unique rhetorical backgrounds and preferences. This self-awareness can inform their writing choices and allow for a more nuanced and authentic engagement with the research.

In conclusion, the participants highlighted the complexity of addressing disciplinary challenges in research article writing. They emphasized the importance of a multifaceted approach encompassing audience awareness, discipline and genre sensitivity, adaptability to evolving conventions, and an appreciation of personal rhetorical choices. By navigating these factors, non-native English speakers can enhance their effectiveness in crafting research articles that meet the diverse expectations of their target disciplines and journals. One of the participants shared their perspective on this issue in this way:

Each academic field has its own set of rules and preferences when it comes to writing research articles. We must learn and adhere to the conventions of our field to produce articles that align with the expectations of the academic community. It is also essential to recognize that different disciplines may have distinct preferences regarding

structure, argumentation style, and evidentiary support. (P6)

The findings of this study reveal that non-native English speakers face various challenges when writing research articles in different disciplines. One main challenge is understanding and applying the disciplinary norms and practices that govern research articles' structure, style, tone, citation, and terminology. The participants reported that they had to adopt a multifaceted approach to address this challenge, which involved considering the purpose and audience of their writing, the discipline and genre of their research article, the evolving conventions of academic English, and their personal rhetorical preferences.

Cultural Challenge

The participants stated they faced the cultural challenge when writing RAs in English. This challenge refers to the difficulty of expressing and communicating their ideas and arguments in a way acceptable and persuasive to readers from different cultural backgrounds. They explained that different cultures have different preferences and expectations for academic writing, such as the degree of directness, formality, politeness, objectivity, and originality. They also mentioned that they needed to be aware of the cultural differences and adapt their writing style and tone to suit the target audience and journal. However, they reported that this was not a simple task, as cultural differences were often subtle and complex and were not explicitly stated in the journal guidelines or feedback. Moreover, they said they faced a dilemma between conforming to the dominant American or British norms of academic writing and maintaining their own

cultural identity and voice. The following statement reflects the view of one of the participants on this issue:

Different cultures have distinct preferences and expectations when it comes to academic writing. This includes factors like the level of directness, formality, politeness, objectivity, and even the perception of originality. When writing, we need to be mindful of these cultural nuances and adapt our style and tone to suit our target audience and the journal we're submitting to. (P11)

The participants reported that cultural challenges depended on many interconnected factors. They stated that one of these factors was the writer's purpose and the audience they wanted to reach. The writer should know the readers' cultural backgrounds, expectations, and preferences. They also suggested that the writer adjust their content and style to communicate well with their audience. They opined that they should think about how direct, formal, polite, objective, and original they should be. They mentioned another factor was the discipline and genre of the research article. They believed that different fields might have different rules and practices regarding the cultural aspects of writing. So, they believed that writers should pay attention to the details of their fields and follow the conventions accepted by their community. They acknowledged that academic English's changing conventions and expectations were the third factor. They observed that these conventions might differ for all fields, sub-fields, journals, or reviewers. They recommended that writers be flexible and ready to change their writing according to the current norms of academic

English. They said the writer's cultural background and personal preferences were a fourth factor. The participants reported that non-native speakers might have difficulty following the common English norms of academic writing or keeping their cultural identity and voice. This choice between fitting in or being authentic showed how complex it was to deal with cultural challenges in research article writing. One of the participants expressed their opinion on this issue as follows:

Understanding the cultural backgrounds, expectations, and preferences of our readers is crucial. When we write, we need to consider how direct, formal, polite, objective, and original our writing should be to effectively communicate with our intended audience. This consideration directly ties into the cultural dimension; as cultural norms shape these elements of communication.
(12)

This study explored the cultural challenges non-native English speakers faced when writing research articles in English. The findings revealed that the participants encountered difficulties expressing and communicating their ideas and arguments acceptably and persuasively to readers from different cultural backgrounds. The participants also reported that they had to consider many factors that influenced their writing, such as the purpose, audience, discipline, genre, and conventions of academic English. Moreover, the participants faced a dilemma between conforming to the dominant norms of academic writing and maintaining their cultural identity and voice. The study suggests that writers must be aware of the cultural differences and nuances in

academic writing and adapt their style and tone accordingly. The study also implies that more guidance and support are needed for non-native English speakers to overcome cultural challenges and improve their research article writing skills.

Discussion

This study has investigated the linguistic challenges non-native English speakers from Nepal encounter when writing research articles in English. The findings confirm the previous literature that has reported linguistic challenges as the main difficulties non-native English speakers face in academic writing (Belcher, 2007; Flowerdew, 2012; Tenzer & Pudelko, 2017). These studies have shown that non-native English speakers often lack the necessary linguistic knowledge and skills to cope with the complex and demanding task of academic writing. They may have problems with vocabulary, grammar, syntax, spelling, word order, tense, aspect, coherence, and cohesion, which affect the clarity, accuracy, and credibility of their writing. These problems may also lead to misunderstanding or rejection by readers or editors who expect high linguistic standards in academic English. However, unlike the previous literature that has focused on linguistic challenges as a general phenomenon across different contexts and disciplines, this study reveals some specific factors that influenced the linguistic challenges of the participants from Nepal. These factors include the low literacy rate and education quality in Nepal, the restricted access to and participation in the global academic community, and the potential interference from their first language or other languages. These factors prevented them from developing their linguistic competence and

confidence in English, especially in academic writing. They also affected their linguistic performance and acceptance of academic writing. The finding aligns with Phothongsunan (2016) who also focused on the language challenges of non-native English speakers in specific contexts or academic disciplines. Therefore, this study confirms that writing research articles in English is challenging for non-native English speakers who face various linguistic challenges that affect their academic writing performance and acceptance. The study also identifies some specific factors that influenced the linguistic challenges of the participants from Nepal. The study contributes to the existing literature on non-native English speakers' challenges in academic writing by providing insights from a specific context and perspective.

The research explored that university-level EFL teachers face rhetorical challenges when writing RAs in English. These challenges align with prior literature, highlighting the lack of rhetorical awareness and skills among non-native English speakers in academic writing (Belcher, 2007; Flowerdew, 2012; Tenzer & Pudelko, 2017). However, this study also reveals some specific contextual factors that affect the rhetorical challenges of university-level EFL teachers from Nepal. These factors include the writer's purpose and audience, the discipline and genre of the RA, the expectations of academic English, and the cultural background and preferences of the writer. These factors result in variations in rhetorical features such as structure, problem-solution patterns, hedging and boosting devices, citation practices, and genre-specific features. For example, Dastjerdi et al. (2017), discovered that

RAs often exhibit more complex structures and problem-solving patterns within their content compared to other academic disciplines. Naftal and Jairos (2016) discovered that research articles employ a higher frequency of hedging and boosting devices, as well as citation practices, compared to other genres. The main reasons for these rhetorical challenges are Nepal's diverse cultural background and the limited access to and engagement with the global academic community. Nepali culture values collectivism, harmony, hierarchy, indirectness, politeness over individualism, conflict, equality, directness, and assertiveness. These cultural values influence their rhetorical choices when writing RAs in English. For instance, (Whang, 2020) found that non-native English-speaking reviewers from Korea also used more indirect and polite language when giving feedback to fellow researchers. Nepal's geographical, political, and economic constraints hinder the development and quality of research and education in Nepal, as well as the communication and collaboration with international scholars and institutions. They also result in insufficient exposure to academic English and contemporary research publication standards. They also cause difficulties in identifying the purpose and audience for their RAs. For example, Moldovan (2011) revealed that non-native English speakers encountered significant challenges and discrimination when it came to publishing and sharing their research findings, primarily attributed to language barriers. Therefore, this study confirms that writing RAs in English is challenging for non-native English speakers who face various rhetorical challenges that affect their academic writing performance and acceptance. The study also reveals factors that influence the rhetorical

difficulties faced by university-level EFL teachers from Nepal.

The study also revealed that the participants encountered a disciplinary challenge, which is one of the main difficulties that university-level EFL teachers face when writing research articles in English, as reported by previous studies (Belcher, 2007; Flowerdew, 2012; Tenzer & Pudelko, 2017). These studies have shown that different disciplines have different rhetorical patterns, genre features, citation practices, and terminology that reflect their epistemological and methodological assumptions, values, and goals. Therefore, non-native English speakers must be aware of these disciplinary differences and adapt their writing to the specific conventions and expectations of their target discipline and journal. However, this is not a simple or straightforward process, as disciplinary norms and practices are often tacit and dynamic and may vary across disciplines, sub-disciplines, journals, or even individual reviewers (Lillis, 2010). Moreover, some disciplines may have stricter and more standardized requirements than others, which may pose additional challenges for non-native writers with different rhetorical preferences or cultural backgrounds (Flowerdew, 2000). Non-native English speakers can develop their disciplinary literacy and competence by using various means, such as reading extensively, attending workshops, seeking feedback, and using online resources. These means can boost their understanding and application of the specific knowledge and methods of their discipline or field of study. They can also help them conform to the rules and preferences of their field, such as how to structure, argue, and support their research.

The study highlighted the cultural challenge as one of the main difficulties non-native English speakers face when writing research articles in English. This finding is consistent with previous research that highlighted the cultural challenge as one of the main difficulties non-native English speakers face when writing RAs in English (Belcher, 2007; Flowerdew, 2012; Tenzer & Pudelko, 2017). These studies have shown that different cultures have different preferences and expectations for academic writing, which reflect their epistemological and axiological assumptions, values, and goals. Therefore, non-native English speakers must know these cultural differences and adapt their writing style and tone to suit the target audience and journal. However, this is not a simple or straightforward process, as cultural differences are often subtle and complex and may not be explicitly stated in the journal guidelines or feedback (Miller, A. L., & Davis, 2012). Moreover, some non-native speakers may face a dilemma between conforming to the dominant English norms of academic writing and maintaining their cultural identity and voice (Brown, 2005). To overcome the cultural challenge, non-native English speakers must enhance their intercultural competence and sensitivity and obtain feedback from native speakers or cross-cultural peers.

Conclusion

This study has explored the complex challenges non-native English-speaking university-level EFL teachers in Nepal encounter when writing research articles in English for global academic discourse. These challenges involve linguistic, rhetorical, disciplinary, and cultural aspects, which reflect the difficulty of

participating in a diverse and dynamic academic community. First, linguistic challenges include problems with vocabulary, grammar, coherence, and cohesion, which affect the clarity and precision of academic writing. The study suggests that these challenges result from limited exposure to academic English resources and the lack of proficient guidance. Therefore, the study recommends specialized language support programs and peer collaborations to provide constructive feedback and enhance language skills. Second, rhetorical challenges involve difficulties with the conventions of academic writing, such as the structure of articles, the establishment of an authorial voice, and the adaptation to different disciplinary and audience expectations. The study suggests that these challenges require a nuanced understanding of rhetorical norms, which can be developed through academic mentorship programs and discipline-specific writing workshops. Third, disciplinary challenges relate to the different expectations and conventions of various academic fields for research articles. The study suggests that these

challenges demand interdisciplinary adaptability, which can be fostered by encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration and providing resources to keep abreast of evolving conventions. Finally, cultural challenges concern adapting academic writing to diverse cultural preferences, such as directness, formality, politeness, objectivity, and originality. The study suggests that these challenges highlight the importance of recognizing and respecting cultural nuances and promoting cultural sensitivity in academic writing guidelines.

These multifaceted challenges require concerted efforts from individuals, academic institutions, and the broader academic community. A more inclusive and diverse global academic dialogue can be cultivated by providing targeted support, fostering mentorship and interdisciplinary collaboration, and promoting cultural sensitivity. Ultimately, these endeavors will significantly enrich global academic knowledge, benefiting scholars from diverse linguistic, cultural, and disciplinary backgrounds.

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