TOWARDS A LEARNER-CENTERED APPROACH TO ACADEMIC WRITING INSTRUCTION IN THE TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (TEFL) CONTEXT OF IRAN

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Abstract. *Academic writing constitutes a significant part of teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) students' academic literacy. Therefore, it is paramount to adopt sound approaches to efficient instruction of academic writing to students of TEFL. To achieve these aims, this mixed-methods study explores the perceptions of Iranian Master of Arts (MA) students of TEFL about their attitudes towards learning academic writing and its challenges and merits. Instruments of this study included a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. A total of 289 TEFL students took part in the survey phase of the study and 119 TEFL students participated in the interview phase of the study. The findings indicated that the TEFL students held positive attitudes towards learning academic writing despite several perceived challenges and obstacles to its learning in the TEFL context of Iran. The barriers included both stakeholder-related and pragmatic constraints. It was also depicted that the students had low levels of genre-based skills related to academic writing. Furthermore, TEFL students' interest in academic genres and their preference of activities and materials which can be used for academic writing instruction and learning were examined and discussed. The results of this study can have direct implications for the integration of academic writing instruction in TEFL curricula across the world.*

Key words: *TEFL, academic writing, attitudes, students, challenges, materials*

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching writing as a skill has gained tremendous popularity among the scholars and researchers of applied linguistics quite recently. As a result, a plethora of research findings and theories have been presented and discussed regarding teaching writing as a skill (Usó-Juan, Martínez-Flor, & Palmer-Silveira, 2006). More importantly, nowadays, learning how to write is a crucial issue since many students might not be involved in face-to-face communication and due to this fact they should be proficient in the skill of writing (Raimes, 1983). Harmer (2004) maintains that learning to write in a foreign language is a very important skill which needs more attention and devotion. Celce-Murcia (2001) asserts that writing is a skill learning of which is challenging and many native speakers of English are not competent in this skill similar to the majority of non-native speakers.

In terms of academic writing, Ramoroka (2012) believes that a large number of university students and instructors consider learning and teaching academic writing as a challenging task. More importantly, there might exist considerable discrepancy between

students' and instructors' perceptions and anticipations of academic writing (Gimenez 2008). However, it is obvious that both university students and instructors need to have international communication with the members of other academic communities across the world (Coffin, Curry, Goodman, Hewings, Lillis, & Swann, 2002). Unfortunately, in many educational curricula, teaching academic writing is a neglected issue and it is deemed that learning academic writing does not need any explicit instruction. As Ramoroka (2012) argues, university students must learn academic writing if they are supposed to succeed in their academic studies. Obviously, those students who ignore learning academic writing will lose the opportunity to communicate with larger academic communities.

More specifically, Ramoroka (2012) emphasizes that it is a fallacy to think that learning academic writing is the same in all majors and disciplines. Each major and discipline possesses its own socio-cultural and generic features which are shared by that specific discourse community. Thus, it is essential to analyze the specific socio-cultural context of each discipline and gear the teaching of academic writing to the demands of that particular discourse community.

Concerning the teaching of academic writing, Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) note that there are four distrint approaches which can be adopted. The first approach is the product approach whose focus is on the production of actual academic texts. Text-analysis and modeling are two important techniques in the product approach to teaching academic writing. Gabrielatos (2002) argues that the product approach to academic writing is a traditional one which is strictly teacher-centered and is in accordance with audio-lingual and behavioristic views to language teaching.

Accordingly, the other significant approach to teaching academic writing is the process approach. This approach to writing is on the basis of experiential approaches to learning, i.e., learning by doing (Nunan, 1999). Proponents of the process approach to writing believe that writing occurs in three major stages, i.e., prewriting, writing, and editing (Hedge, 1988). The prewriting stage includes topic selection, brainstorming, and goal setting. The writing stage consists of writing and rewriting various drafts. The last stage, editing, deals with focusing on form and revising the syntactic and syntactic errors and mistakes of the draft. Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) discuss that the process approach to academic writing emphasizes on the process of writing, thinking, and problem solving.

The other major approach to academic writing is called the socio-constructivist approach. In this approach, writing is considered as a social activity and the context of writing plays a pivotal role. Similarly, writers are supposed to take sociocultural aspects and specifications of the context into account and make attempts to conform to the conventions and norms of specific discourse and academic communities. Thus, it is crucial to consider the specifications of each academic genre in this approach and make students aware of the particular norms of those established genres. Hyland (2003) stresses that the socio-constructivist approach to writing focuses on the use of language functions in different social contexts and events.

Consequently, Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) propose that adopting one approach to academic writing might not be suitable for EAP writing instruction. Nordin and Mohammad (2006) posit that instructors of academic writing should strive to choose an eclectic approach to teaching academic writing. Therefore, it can be concluded that a synthesis of the three approaches to teaching academic writing can be promising for both university students and instructors of academic writing.

As for research on students' perceptions of academic writing, Jones (2011) analyzed the perceptions of undergraduate students about academic writing. She reported that the

students had different views of academic writing. She also found that there was a discrepancy between the perceptions of the instructors and students about academic writing. The students perceived academic writing as important for their future careers. Following the same research strand, Cai (2013) surveyed the perceptions of MA students of English about academic writing. She noted that the majority of the students had not attended any courses for academic writing and because of this, they had difficulty writing academically. She reported that the students needed specific courses on learning generic and linguistic aspects of academic writing. More specifically, her study emphasizes the role of training and explicit instruction in preparing students for learning academic writing skills. Sun (2004) reported that although many Chinese students are constantly involved in writing research papers, their level of academic writing proficiency is limited and inadequate.

Academic writing is a necessary skill for many Iranian MA and PhD graduates and students of TEFL. Moreover, Iranian MA and PhD students need to write their thesis in English and publish articles in international and local journals. Despite its importance, very limited attention has been directed towards the issue of teaching and learning academic writing in the TEFL context of Iran. Therefore, the current study was conducted to examine students' perceptions of academic writing, its challenges and benefits in the context of Iran, and students' level of proficiency for academic writing. The results of this study will have implications for TEFL decision-makers and educational planners to revise their TEFL curriculum to include academic writing in their teaching and learning practices. To achieve the aims of the study, the following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the perceptions of Iranian MA students of TEFL on learning academic writing?

2. What are the perceptions of Iranian MA students of TEFL on their level of academic writing skills?

3. What are the perceptions of Iranian MA students of TEFL on their interest in different academic genres?

4. What are the perceptions of Iranian MA students of TEFL on their preference of academic writing activities and materials?

2. METHODOLOGY

In order to delve into the perceptions of the participants and conduct methodological triangulation, two instruments, i.e., questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were employed to collect qualitative and quantitative data. The triangulation of results enables researchers to enhance the validity of their findings and provides a more comprehensive description of the context under study.

2.1. Participants

A total of 289 MA students of TEFL participated in the survey study. The average age of the participants was 23.4. Both male (n=112) and female (177) students were included in the sample. All the students had passed their writing course. The students were chosen from several public and non-public universities. A cluster sample was considered for the purposes of this study. All the participants perceived their general language proficiency as upper-intermediate or advanced. Also, 119 MA students of TEFL participated in the interview phase of the study. These participants were chosen from the same clusters

which were included in the survey phase of the study. After administering the survey, the participants were invited to participate in the interview phase of the study and 119 students accepted the invitation.

2.2. Instrumentation

The first instrument of this study was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed based on extensive analysis and review of previous research findings and theoretical perspectives on teaching and learning academic writing. More specifically, after preparing the list of items, a panel of six senior professors of TEFL commented on the content and language of the questionnaire. The panel of experts were given checklists and were interviewed in order to improve the quality of the items and the survey. Several items were added, deleted, or revised after several sessions of evaluation with the panel of experts. These measures were crucial to be taken to establish the content validity of the instrument. The finalized questionnaire was administered to a group of 20 MA students of TEFL to further explore the suitability of the items and establish the face validity of the instrument. The original language of the questionnaire was English. The paper-based versions of the questionnaire were administered to the participants. Also the results of Cronbach Alpha test indicated high levels of reliability for the three sections of the questionnaire (Alpha index for section one=0.89, Alpha index for section 2=0.91, Alpha index for section 3=0.90, Alpha index for section 4=0.93).

The finalized version of the questionnaire comprised four sections. The first section of the questionnaire investigated Iranian TEFL students' attitudes towards learning academic writing. This section consisted of 15 items based on five-point Likert items from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The second section of the questionnaire examined TEFL students' perceptions of their level of academic writing skills. This section was designed based on five-point Likert items from not proficient to very proficient. This section included 18 items. The third section of the questionnaire addressed students' preference of different academic genres related to their discipline. This section was based on five-point Likert items from not interested to very interested. Finally, the last section of the questionnaire analyzed students' preference of academic writing activities and materials. This section was based on five-point Likert items and ranged from least preferable to most preferable.

As for the ethical issues related to this study, a consent form was submitted to each participant in which the purposes of the study, the voluntary participation of the participants, anonymity, and confidentiality were explained and elaborated on. At times, the researchers themselves explained the aims of the research and ethical aspects to the participants of the study.

To explore students' attitudes towards academic writing and its challenges and merits in the TEFL context of Iran, semi-structured interviews were also conducted. The same literature was used to develop the questions of the interviews. The same panel of experts commented on the questions of the interviews and confirmed the content validity of the questions. The following questions were developed:

1. What do you think about academic writing and its importance in the TEFL major?
2. What are the specific benefits of learning academic writing for the students of TEFL?
3. What are the challenges and barriers to learning academic writing in the TEFL major?

2.3. Data analysis

The questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented in form of the mean and standard deviation. Also, the interview data were analyzed through conducting content analysis. Two coders read the interview data and the common themes which emerged were included in the Results section. As for the reliability of analysis, an inter-rater agreement of 92.3% was achieved which was appropriate for the purposes of this study. Actual quotations of the interview participants were also included in the Results section.

2.4. Results

Students' attitudes towards learning academic writing

Questionnaire findings

Table 1 indicates that the students showed positive attitudes towards learning academic writing despite several barriers and obstacles. More specifically, the students perceived pragmatic constraints as a serious concern regarding teaching and learning academic writing in Iranian TEFL contexts. The majority of students agreed or strongly agreed that the lack of workshops and training courses for academic writing, the lack of appropriate textbooks on academic writing, writing instructors' lack of attention to teaching academic writing, and inefficiency of current writing courses for students of TEFL are the most significant pragmatic impediments of learning academic writing in TEFL contexts in Iran. In addition, the total mean of this factor was 4.54 which shows that the participants had a high level of consensus on the importance of this factor.

The second factor which was perceived as a barrier to the teaching and learning academic writing was associated with stakeholder-related constraints. These constraints included the lack of attention of educational authorities to include academic writing in the TEFL curriculum, TEFL students' low general writing proficiency, and writing instructors' inadequate knowledge of academic writing. Moreover, the total mean of this factor (4.15) reveals that the participants had a high level of agreement on the importance of this factor (Table 1).

As for the third factor, perceived benefits of learning academic writing skills, the results indicated a generally positive attitude towards learning academic writing and its skills. The participants had consensus that learning academic writing helps them join international academic communities, academic writing is important for students' future career in the long run, academic writing skills is important to current graduate studies, academic writing is a learning need for MA students of TEFL, and academic writing is the most important language skill for MA students of TEFL. The total mean of the factor (4.42) is also indicative of the positive attitudes of the participants towards learning academic writing (Table 1).

Finally, the last factor of this section of the questionnaire shows that learning academic writing has a facilitative role in fostering other skills. The participants perceived that learning academic writing can enhance their academic literacy, academic reading proficiency, and publishing skills. The total mean of this factor (4.24) illustrates that the majority of students have agreement on this factor.

Table 1 Questionnaire results for TEFL students' attitudes towards academic writing

Factor 1: Pragmatic constraints	Mean	SD
There are no workshops or training courses for teaching academic writing	4.38	0.78
There is no suitable textbook for learning academic writing	4.66	0.94
Teaching academic writing is not a priority for writing instructors	4.49	0.81
The current writing courses offered for MA students are not efficient	4.61	0.59
Total mean= 4.54		
Stakeholder-related constraints	Mean	SD
TEFL educational authorities do not pay attention to include academic writing in the MA curriculum	4.12	0.95
I am not proficient enough in writing for general purposes	4.32	0.60
Only few writing instructors have adequate knowledge about academic writing	4.01	1.01
Total mean= 4.15		
Perceived benefits of learning academic writing skills	Mean	SD
Learning academic writing helps me join international academic communities	4.76	0.71
Importance of academic writing for students' future career in the long run	4.40	0.99
Importance of academic writing skills to current graduate studies	3.87	1.12
Academic writing is a learning need for MA students of TEFL	4.79	0.68
Academic writing is the most important language skill for MA students of TEFL	4.27	0.91
Total mean= 4.42		
Effect of academic writing skills on other academic skills	Mean	SD
Learning academic writing will foster my academic literacy	4.19	0.90
Learning academic writing will promote academic reading proficiency	3.69	1.18
Importance of having academic work published during the graduate study	4.85	0.71
Total mean= 4.24		

Interview results

As Table 2 shows, there are several merits and challenges related to learning academic writing in the TEFL context of Iran.

Table 2 Interview results for TEFL students' attitudes towards learning academic writing

Interview themes(frequency)	Participants' quotes
Academic writing is a need for students of TEFL (n=114)	It is obvious that learning academic writing is necessary for each TEFL student. Without knowing how to write academically, we will lose the opportunity to progress in our major.
High academic writing skills helps TEFL students to publish their works in prestigious journals (90)	"One reason that we are afraid to write papers is our uncertainty about our academic writing proficiency. If I had adequate levels of academic writing, I would be brave enough to send my paper to ISI journals." (Student 4)
Learning academic writing can improve TEFL students' General English proficiency (83)	"Well, I think that when we learn academic writing, we can improve our other language skills, too. For example, students who can

	write well are usually those who can read well, too." (Student 44)
Lack of attention of university instructors and authorities to including academic writing courses/training (n=113)	"As a TEFL student, I think our instructors and the people who are decision-makers are indifferent about teaching academic writing to us. Without paying attention to academic writing as an important part of our educational program, it is not possible to include it in our priorities." (Student 67) "To include academic writing training for students of TEFL, those who plan should be willing to hold academic writing classes or us. I believe students should not be blamed!" (Student 9)
Inefficiency of current writing courses offered to students of TEFL (n=98)	"I suppose our writing classes are really ineffective and irrelevant to our needs. We spend a lot of time and energy to attend these courses, but we do not learn anything about writing in these classes. I wish the instructors taught academic writing in these courses instead." (Student 42)
Writing instructors' lack of knowledge about academic writing (n=104)	"To be honest, not very experienced and professional instructors are usually considered for writing courses. This is an important factor which impedes our academic writing learning." (Student 92)
Lack of time to improve academic writing (n=74)	"We have to learn a lot of things, and have to pass a lot of credits and lessons. Therefore, I personally do not have enough time to improve my academic writing, but I am sure it is a very necessary skill which should be learnt soon or later." (Student 23)
Low levels of general writing proficiency (n=95)	"Well, if you ask me about the barriers to learning academic writing, I will say you can find very few students who can write correctly and properly. So, our problem is writing in general first and then we can talk about academic writing." (Student 6)
Lack of proper materials related to academic writing for TEFL students (n=101)	"As you may know, there are not any suitable textbooks or guidebooks which are comprehensive and easy to be read and learnt. This is really a pity." (Student 44) "I have seen a lot of good guidebooks and manuals for general writing, but I do not know if we have books related to academic writing for TEFL students." (Student 79)

2.5. Students' perceptions of their level of academic writing skills

In terms of TEFL students' levels of genre-based skills, Table 3 shows that the majority of students (total mean=2.93) are undecided or uncertain about their level of genre-based skills. Specifically, the participants perceived to be undecided about some genre-based skills, including summarizing and presenting the data, reviewing and critiquing the previous research and creating a research space (gap), writing introductions, writing the design of the research, writing up the methods section, writing conclusions, and commentaries and discussions on the data.

Table 3 Questionnaire results for TEFL students' perceptions of their level
of academic writing skills

Factor 1: Genre-based skills	Mean	SD
Writing introductions	3.12	0.81
Reviewing and critiquing the previous research and creating a research space (gap)	3.36	0.78
Writing the design of the research	2.97	0.94
Writing up the methods section	2.75	0.68
Summarizing and presenting the data	3.46	1.10
Commentaries and discussions on the data	2.40	0.87
Writing conclusions	2.48	0.98
Total mean= 2.93		
Factor 2: Academic language-based skills	Mean	SD
Proof reading academic written assignments	3.68	0.65
Using appropriate lexical phrases (such as on the basis of, it should be noted that) freely to build up the sentences and paragraphs	3.92	0.90
Understanding the specific language features of the academic genre (such as research paper)	3.75	0.88
Using proper academic language and vocabulary (style)	3.90	0.72
Using the proper grammar such as correct tenses, agreements, reporting verbs, and prepositions	3.99	0.81
Total mean= 3.85		
Factor 3: Paragraphing skills	Mean	SD
Summarizing/paraphrasing	4.02	0.69
Writing coherent paragraphs	3.95	0.70
Linking sentences smoothly	3.98	0.76
Total mean= 3.98		
Factor 4: Referencing skills	Mean	SD
Searching for appropriate literature using databases and library resources	4.13	0.79
Referring to sources	4.00	0.85
Writing references/bibliography	3.72	0.99
Total mean= 3.95		

As for the second factor which addressed TEFL students' perceptions of their language-based skills required for effective academic writing, the results reveal that the participants (total mean=3.85) considered themselves as moderately proficient. The

participants perceived to be moderately proficient in language-related skills, including using the proper grammar such as correct tenses, agreements, reporting verbs, and prepositions, using appropriate lexical phrases (such as on the basis of, it should be noted that) freely to build up the sentences and paragraphs, using proper academic language and vocabulary (style), understanding the specific language features of the academic genre (such as research paper), and proof reading academic written assignments.

The third factor explored the paragraphing skills of TEFL students. The participants (total mean=3.98) perceived to be proficient in paragraphing skills. The participants reported that they were proficient in paragraphing skills, including summarizing/ paraphrasing, linking sentences smoothly, and writing coherent paragraphs.

Finally, referencing skills were the last factor which may have effects on TEFL students' ability to write academically. Even though the majority of the participants perceived that they were proficient in searching for appropriate literature using databases and library resources, and referring to sources, they were somewhat uncertain about their level of ability to write references and bibliographies. In general, the results showed that the participants (total mean=3.95) perceived to be moderately proficient in referencing skills required for academic writing.

2.6. Students' interest in different academic genres related to their discipline (TEFL)

The third section of the questionnaire explored students' preference of different academic genres related to their discipline (TEFL). The TEFL students reported that they were interested in several academic genres, including writing research papers/reports, writing research proposals, writing argumentative essays, and writing theses. The participants were either undecided about or uninterested in writing review articles, writing short summaries, writing critiques, and case studies (Table 4).

Table 4 Questionnaire results for students' interest in different academic genres related to their discipline (TEFL)

	Mean	SD
Writing research papers/reports	4.67	0.75
Writing general argumentative essays	4.19	0.84
Writing research proposal	4.38	0.90
Writing review articles	3.02	0.96
Writing short summaries	2.97	1.01
Writing critiques	2.10	0.77
Writing thesis	4.12	0.86
Writing case studies	3.59	0.92

2.7. Students' preference of academic writing activities and materials

The last section of the questionnaire examined students' preference of academic writing activities and materials. The majority of students preferred academic writing activities and materials, including supplementary authentic research papers as models, group discussions on tasks, academic writing textbooks, other supplementary handouts, student oral presentations, academic reading exercises (reading textbooks), reading and analyzing authentic research papers, and academic vocabulary and grammar exercise (Table 5).

Table 5 Questionnaire results for student's preference of academic writing activities and materials

	Mean	SD
Academic writing textbooks	4.49	0.94
Other supplementary handouts	4.10	0.67
Supplementary authentic research papers as models	4.69	0.71
Supplementary exercises	3.33	0.80
Teacher-centered lectures	3.48	1.08
Student oral presentations	4.20	0.96
Group discussions on tasks	4.71	0.85
Academic grammar drills	3.96	0.93
Academic vocabulary drills	3.89	0.88
Academic writing exercises	3.69	0.69
Academic reading exercises (reading textbooks)	4.09	1.01
Reading and analyzing authentic research papers	4.40	0.83

3. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate TEFL students' attitudes towards learning academic writing and the challenges to integrating academic writing instruction in the TEFL curriculum of Iran. The findings of the study indicate that while students are generally positive about learning academic writing in TEFL courses in Iran, a plethora of barriers exist in this regard. The majority of the students perceived academic writing as an important skill that should be included in their learning practices. It is paramount that TEFL decision-makers and educational planners pay specific attention to this need of TEFL students and strive to plan their courses based on students' needs, preferences and lacks (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). It was also revealed that learning academic writing can have effects on learning other academic skills and competences. This finding is in accordance with the studies which have pointed out the importance of academic writing for university students (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Harmer, 2004; Ramoroka, 2012). If TEFL students wish to be successful in their future careers and academic progress, they should have positive attitudes towards academic writing and strive to up-date their knowledge and proficiency of academic writing constantly. It is obvious that TEFL students need the help and attention of TEFL instructors and authorities in order to be able to learn academic writing and foster their academic writing proficiently on a continuous basis.

Contrary to students' positive perspectives on learning academic writing, it appears that several considerable obstacles may discourage or prevent Iranian TEFL students from learning academic writing. Specifically, the findings showed that there are both pragmatic and stakeholder-related constraints concerning including academic writing instruction in TEFL courses of Iran. One serious lack is associated with training and explicit teaching of academic writing for TEFL students in Iran. The students perceived that the current writing courses are not efficient and there is not adequate training for learning academic writing skills. Furthermore, it was found that there is no suitable textbook for teaching and learning academic writing in the TEFL context of Iran. Moreover, there are several pragmatic limitations as well. One significant barrier is that some writing instructors do not have the sufficient level of academic writing competence

to teach it in writing courses. This constraint is a significant one which will influence students' positive attitudes towards academic writing. TEFL educational authorities are recommended to discover other challenges to learning academic writing in the TEFL context of Iran, and match the demands of the target situation to the demands of the present situation. More importantly, it is crucial that writing instructors strive to foster their knowledge of academic writing and adopt appropriate approaches and techniques to teaching academic writing in their writing courses. As Ramoroka (2012) asserts, the anticipations of teachers, students, and educational authorities might be different regarding academic writing, however it is important to reduce the discrepancy among TEFL stakeholders' attitudes and match what is desirable to what is possible.

In addition, the analysis of the data illustrated that students are interested in learning a wide range of academic genres related to their discipline. It is essential to examine students' needs with regard to academic genres and plan specific workshops or training courses to enable students to foster their knowledge of those skills. Ideally, TEFL students need to learn about various academic genres and the specifications of those specific genres. This finding indicates that the students might need specific training for each type of genre. To facilitate students' learning of these academic genres, specific workshops can be held in which students get involved in learning these academic genres collaboratively. Also, writing instructors can use authentic models of each genre and its analysis to increase students' awareness of these academic genres. Genre-awareness activities can provide students with tremendous opportunities for learning academic writing and fostering their academic literacy.

Concerning TEFL students' perceptions of their current academic writing proficiency level, the participants reported that their level of academic proficiency is not adequate. While the majority of students were somewhat proficient in linguistic and paragraphing skills related to academic writing, the majority of them lacked knowledge of genre-based skills required for efficient academic writing. This issue is a challenging one which needs to be taken into account by educational authorities seriously. Writing instructors should strive to teach different skills related to academic writing proficiency. Ignoring any of skills required for academic writing will lead to students' lack of ability to write academically.

With regard to students' perceptions of their preferred academic writing activities and materials, the students reported that they preferred academic writing activities and materials, including supplementary authentic research papers as models, group discussions on tasks, academic writing textbooks, other supplementary handouts, student oral presentations, academic reading exercises (reading textbooks), reading and analyzing authentic research papers, and academic vocabulary and grammar exercise. This finding depicts that the students need to be exposed to various materials and activities to learn academic writing more effectively. Additionally, more creative materials and activities can be designed by writing instructors to increase students' motivation to learn academic writing more easily. In order to maximize the efficiency of writing courses, the writing instructors should make attempts to base their courses on students' preferences and academic needs. To pave the way, educational authorities should facilitate teachers' and students' access to high-quality and efficient academic writing materials and activities.

This study will have implications for all stakeholders of TEFL. The majority of TEFL students finish their studies without having adequate proficiency to write academically. Writing courses are offered to TEFL students in Iran, but the quality of these courses might not be that high and sufficient. These courses are usually based on teachers' specific speculations about students' writing needs which are far from the reality. Further

research is required to be directed towards TEFL students' academic writing needs and preferences in other TEFL contexts across the world. Research into university teachers' perceptions of academic writing and its challenges and merits can also have promising implications for renewing and revising current TEFL curricula. Equally important is that students, teachers, and authorities work collaboratively to remove the barriers to the instruction of academic writing in TEFL courses.

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