

Aspects of Quality in the Research Papers of Undergraduates: A Case Study

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Abstract: This paper presents the results of an exploratory study that sought to identify possible gaps in students' competence in writing. More specifically, the study focuses on the problems experienced by students in organizing and presenting materials to achieve a certain communicative purpose. The study is based on a few cases selected for an in-depth analysis of the problem. Five senior essays written by students in the teaching stream in the Department of Foreign languages and Literature of Addis Ababa University served as the source of data for the study. The basic procedure used for data collection involved conducting an inventory of the problematic parts in the sample students' written work. The results suggest that the work of students suffered from a range of errors. While some of the errors committed tend to suggest lack of mastery of the basic skill of writing, others appear to be caused by lack of familiarity with the conventions of research report writing. The paper concludes by identifying some of the implications of the findings.

One of the abilities that most universities wish their students to develop during their stay at university is the ability to undertake research independently. In fact, the emphasis placed on the need to enhance and foster the research capability of university students at various levels is evident in the long-standing and widespread tradition among universities to require a thesis for graduation. One major purpose of the thesis is to provide evidence that the student is capable of doing two things: namely, undertaking an original research activity and communicating the work done effectively.

Most Departments at AAU have for a long time pursued a policy that stresses the production of a satisfactory thesis by a candidate as a major condition that has to be met for a successful completion of a programme of study leading to a first, second and third degree. By

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requiring a thesis, the university aims to achieve the following purposes. To begin with, writing a thesis provides the student with the opportunity to gain practical experience in research. Arguably, the importance of a thesis lies in its ability to serve as an effective tool for training students in research and problem-solving skills. Secondly, it represents an effective way of encouraging the practical application of knowledge gained through the various courses of a programme. Further, a thesis provides an important mechanism for determining and maintaining quality of scholarship. According to Day (1993), most universities rely on thesis as a source of evidence in assessing whether a candidate has been able to demonstrate an acceptable level of maturation, discipline, and scholarship and hence consider a satisfactory thesis as the "ticket-out". Finally, a thesis provides a valuable experience in terms of preparing the candidate to become a reflective and critical professional capable of solving real problems in his/her career life. It is also noteworthy that this is consistent with the emphasis placed by the National Education and Training Policy (NETP) of Ethiopia to make higher learning institutions research-oriented.

In an effort to help the student achieve the desired level of competence in conducting research, many departments in AAU include a course in research methodology with a view to helping students acquire the basic skills and concepts involved in carrying out research. In addition, there has been a long-standing practice to create a situation where candidates are assigned supervisors who can assist them with the writing of their thesis or senior essays. One obvious advantage of such an arrangement is that it allows the student access to the expertise of the faculty in solving practical problems. The arrangement also makes it possible for the student to undertake a research activity under the supervision of an expert, which in turn creates greater opportunity for more meaningful practical training in conducting research.

For quite a long time, an important part of the work of the academic staff of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature of AAU

has been to help both undergraduate and post-graduate students in the Department with their written English. In particular, the assistance to undergraduate has been rendered in three forms. Firstly, the Department seeks to improve the writing skills of students by offering basic English proficiency courses. The writing course popularly known as Sophomore English is a case in point. Secondly, there are a series of advanced courses in writing that run in the senior and terminal years. And thirdly, it seeks to improve their writing skill through the feedback and correction on the written work constituting the senior essay. This kind of assistance is offered on a one-to-one basis and is tailored to the needs of individual students. However, it seems that the quality of the written work produced by students after receiving different kinds of assistance and guidance for about three years has often fell short of the expectations of their instructors, supervisors, and potential employers. The purpose of this paper is therefore to identify some of the most persistent difficulties observed in the written work of students. In so doing, this study is confined to the mistakes committed by students in using material to support the assertions they make.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to explore the problems experienced by students in writing a report describing their research. More specifically, the study seeks to achieve the following:

- To give an account of the errors committed by students in writing their senior essays.
- To analyse the problems associated with the use of support material in writing a research paper.
- To identify the errors made by students in organising their ideas and building an argument logically.

Significance of the Study

As indicated earlier, the standard of written work of students has in most cases failed to meet the expectations of their instructors and future employers. It is equally disturbing to note that this remains the case in spite of the fact that students normally take various courses devoted to the teaching of writing. Given such an unhappy situation, one wonders what has been causing such unsatisfactory performance. Moreover, the situation is likely to raise questions about the worth of the several courses offered by the Department and whether the Department is providing the right kind of assistance in terms of helping students achieve a reasonable level of competence in writing. By analysing actual student work, the present study is hoped to provide some useful information about the gaps in student competence, which in turn can be used in designing new courses and revising existing ones. Information obtained by observing students at work on the job can provide a solid basis for making decisions about what students find most difficult and thus need most help with.

Methodology

This paper discusses the results of an exploratory study based on a few cases selected for an in-depth analysis of the problem. Five senior essays written by graduating students in the teaching stream of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature provided a source of data for this study. The senior essays were produced as a partial fulfillment of the requirement for graduation with a BA in teaching English. Thus, all revolved around topics that dealt with an aspect of methodology for teaching EFL. They were all written by male candidates. Their length ranged from 47 to 63 handwritten pages. Handwritten first drafts were preferred to typed (final version) ones, in order to control for the effect of feedback received from the supervisor.

The procedure for data collection and analysis involved the following. First, an inventory of the problematic parts of the senior essays was

made. This involved primarily examining the entire work one by one to locate areas of difficulties in the use, adequacy, and effectiveness of the support materials used in generating the report (senior essay). Once the problems were located, a qualitative analysis of the data was done to determine the nature of errors committed. The results are discussed under several categories drawn from the literature pertaining to errors in reporting a piece of research.

Review of Related Literature

What is Research?

The literature abounds with diverse definitions of the concept of research. A survey of the definitions seem to suggest that the conceptualizations of research tend to differ depending on what aspect of the notion of research is given prominence in the definition. Some tend to define research in terms of the approach to knowledge it involves while others consider the strict procedure it demands as a salient feature of research. Still others tend to emphasize the outcome of research in their definition. Sharma (2000) identifies seven conceptualizations of research. These include:

- research as an attitude of inquiry;
- research as a systematic and scholarly application of the scientific method;
- research as an information we have confidence in;
- research as a careful inquiry;
- research as a systematic and refined techniques for obtaining a more adequate solution to a problem;
- research as an endeavour,
- research as a process of ascertaining principles;
- research as an activity in the development of principles.

Research being a critical, disciplined inquiry into a problem has the following general characteristics (McMillan 1989).

Objectivity

An important quality of a good piece of research is its objectivity. That is to say, it is an objective or unbiased account of a phenomenon. Objectivity in research calls for the treatment of the problem and the data in a logical and less personal fashion. A researcher who is striving for objectivity would resist the temptation to seek only the data that confirm his/her hypothesis and draw conclusions to suit his or her personal feelings and preferences. Objectivity is required at all levels: data collection, analysis, interpretation and conclusion.

Scientific Thinking

Research makes extensive use of scientific thinking which is generally believed to involve inductive and deductive mode of reasoning. Scientific thinking involves a process of search for evidence to test or verify an assertion. It employs logical reasoning which is based on empirical evidence and is used to establish the cause-effect relationship. People have turned to four sources for evidence. These are customs and traditions, authority, personal experience, and syllogistic reasoning (Sharma, 2000).

The Research Paper

An important component of the process of carrying out research concerns the task of writing it up. It is argued that a piece of scientific research is considered incomplete until the results have been published. Since the ultimate goal of scientific inquiry is publication, the research process should culminate in the production of a research report which may be presented orally or in writing. Whatever the form may be, the research report is intended to serve two major purposes. First, through research report the researcher is able to provide the reader with a detailed account of what a particular piece of research sought to answer, what motivated the researcher to undertake the inquiry, what she/he actually did, and in what ways such work contributes to the stockpile of knowledge and theory development. In fact, communicating the results of research by writing it up and

publishing a research report is a vital part of the process of doing science (Deyer 1995). Publication in whatever form places the information obtained from an investigation in the public domain. Second, by providing the reader with a detailed account of the procedures followed in conducting the research, the researcher is creating a condition where readers who are inclined to replicate the work can do so with little difficulty.

In order to meet these twin purposes, the researcher should present information and ideas clearly and effectively. It follows that the ability to accurately communicate scientific information in a research report constitutes a key skill that is needed by every one who undertakes some research work. As Day (1993) aptly pointed out, "Good scientific writing is not a matter of life and death, it is much more serious than that" (p. ix). Successful scientific communication demands the generation of a research report with the following qualities.

A requirement in scientific writing is clarity. Although all forms of written communication are expected to be presented to the reader clearly, absolute clarity is demanded of a research report. Another key characteristic of a research report concerns its success in terms of its content being perceived and interpreted by the reader in a way that matches the meaning intended by the writer. A further feature of scientific writing relates to the use of simple and unambiguous words to convey the message. Besides, a successful research report demands the ability to use language and style characterizing the genre. Finally, there is another principal ingredient of scientific paper - clear organization of material.

Broadly speaking, the general format of research report consists of three major parts: preliminaries, textual body and reference. The preliminary section includes elements such as the title page, preface or acknowledgments, table of contents, etc. The main body is made up of the introduction, review of related literature, design of the study, analysis and presentation of data and conclusions. The reference

section includes the bibliography, appendix, index and glossary (if any).

Errors in Reporting

Report writing represents one of the most difficult tasks involved in a research process. Both experienced and junior researchers find this part of doing research very much demanding. However, this is particularly true of novice researchers and students struggling to write their thesis.

A survey of written work done by students in the university has revealed a range of problems experienced by them. Hobsbaum (1984) showed that a range of basic mis-constructions characterize students' written work. These included grammatical mis- constructions which involved elements of stylistic clumsiness and a logical blur. Other difficulties involved the use of incomplete sentences, fragmentation, linguistic displacement and vagueness. In a similar study, James (1984) identified three categories of mistakes based on a scale of communicative damage: those that led to breakdown in meaning, those that led to a blurring of meaning, and those that distracted the reader from the meaning conveyed.

In addition to errors that involved failure to express oneself effectively in writing, the following errors in reasoning and unwise use of information have been documented. Erickson (1986) noted that poorly written reports of qualitative studies usually suffer from major types of evidentiary inadequacy whose manifestations include instances of inadequate amount of evidence, inadequate variety in kinds of evidence, faulty interpretive status of evidence, inadequate disconfirming evidence as well as inadequate discrepant case analysis. In addition, Sharma (2000) identified a range of reporting errors associated with fallacious reasoning. These include argument from a single or limited number of instances, argument from positive instances and neglect of negative instances, avoidance of evidence contrary to one's opinion, failure to observe important circumstances

affecting different phenomena, erroneous conclusions due to preconceived ideas and prejudice, inaccurate instruments of measurement, and dependence on subjective judgment and estimates.

Finally, a brief account of the nature and state of educational research in Ethiopia would be in order. Studies aimed at investigating research in this sector have addressed a wide range of issues. Some (e.g. Amare Asgedom, 1998; 2000) focused attention on establishing the features and patterns of educational research conducted in the country over the years while others (e.g. Adane Tesera, 2000; Befekadu Zeleke 2000; Derebssa Dufera, 2000; Tsegaye Berhe, 2000) were more interested in exploring the research climate and assessing the involvement and productivity of institutions of higher learning in the country. The overwhelming finding is that educational research is characterised by lack of diversity, inefficient mechanism for dissemination, scarcity of resource and lack of supportive environment.

At this junction, mention should be made of a study by Abdinasir Ahmed (2000), which has particular relevance to the present study. This work explored the problems encountered by senior undergraduate students of AAU in conducting research. The study found that a considerable number of students involved in the survey felt that they were not adequately trained to carry out research required for the production of a senior essay. While Abdinasir's study assesses the opinions of students based on self-report data, the present study seeks to concentrate on the quality of the actual work produced by senior undergraduates. The intention is to assess the standard of the senior essays produced with a view to establishing specific areas where students would need the most help and remedial action.

Results

In what follows, the difficulties experienced by students in writing their senior essay are presented under three main categories: Quality of evidentiary material, Quantity of evidentiary material, and Presentation of evidentiary material.

1. *Quality of Evidentiary Material*

In assessing the quality of material used to support a claim or prove an assertion, I concentrated on the following aspects: the use of testimony, reasoning, relevance accuracy and the interpretative status of material.

The Use of Testimony

The data revealed a range of problems associated with the use of testimony to support a claim. One recurrent problem in the use of testimony concerns the unsuccessful attempt to use expert testimony to support an argument. The difficulty in this area is mainly characterized by students' failure to be specific in using such evidence. There was a tendency for students to use vague expressions such as "*Many scholars argue that..., scholars in the field have said that ..., etc.*" What is interesting about the way such references to authorities *are made* is that they are not accompanied by specific examples from the literature. It seems that students consider such mere reference to authorities in the field in such collective terms would be enough to win credibility. Another manifestation of such vague reference to testimony involves the use of over generalized statements expressed in absolute terms. The occurrence of such attempt to gain credibility is often signaled by expressions such as "*It is undeniable that ..., we all know that people say that ..., every teacher is aware that ...*" as is evident in the following extracts from their work.

- It is said that learner-centred teaching approach is effective and should be applied. It is considered as the best approach of

teaching that enables students to develop their speaking skill. But this does not hold true in our case.

- Regarding English lesson, still people say that students are very poor in English. They say students at any level have several difficulties in speaking English.
- To many of us, the process of teaching and learning seems simple and straight forward.

Ineffective use of testimony is often accompanied by failure to develop the argument by providing sufficient support material. Moreover, the data contained several instances of failure to provide relevant evidence and jumping into conclusions without presenting sufficient material leading to a conclusion. There was also a tendency for students to over depend on one source rather than using a variety of sources. Finally, the data contained some evidence to suggest that students lacked the ability to apply critical thinking skills needed to evaluate and establish the worth/validity of the material they use. Failure to consider the recency of the material often led to the tendency to over- depend on old sources.

Faulty reasoning

The analysis of the work produced by the students suffered from frequent flaws in reasoning. Two types of such errors were very common: fallacy and faulty interpretation. Fallacious statements involved hasty generalisation, building on untested assumptions, drawing unwarranted conclusion and poor logic.

Most hasty generalizations stemmed from failure to follow a sound research procedure. In most cases students failed to match research objectives and research instruments. The result is that some popular instruments such as the questionnaire were used regardless of the nature of the study. The other problem leading to hasty generalization concerns the use of a small sample to gather quantitative data using questionnaire. For instance, in a study that sought to find out the problems encountered in applying learner-centred approach, the

student researcher used a questionnaire with seven teachers and makes the following observations:

- As data in Table Two indicates all of the teachers have been teaching English for more than 11 years. 29 % of them are graduated in English with diploma. The remaining 71% of the teachers are graduated with certificate from TTI. According to the new education and training policy, teachers graduated with diploma should be assigned for second cycle primary schools. So, from this one may conclude that there is a shortage of qualified teachers who can meet the standard set for the level in schools.

In the example below, the researcher draws a conclusion based on the responses received from three teachers.

- According to the information in Table 1 above, 67% of the respondents have strongly agreed that the primary purpose of teaching English is to enable learners to speak in the language fluently. However, 33% of them disagreed with this notion to some extent. This shows that quite a significant number of English teachers have a strong belief on speech communication to be the first target of English language teaching.

Untested assumptions are treated as proven facts upon which arguments are built. For instance, it appears to be a common practice to ask questions about why teachers and/or students fail to show a certain kind of behavior without making any attempt to prove the existence of such behaviour. Examples include decisions to investigate the reasons why teachers fail to use Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), group work, etc. without showing that this is the case.

Drawing unwarranted conclusions and making recommendation that are not data-driven is another feature of the research reports analysed as illustrated in the following example:

- From the above data, we can assume that most number of the population responded as they rarely read additional books to strengthen their language use practice by reading. From this we can conclude that the habit of reading is not well developed among students. To do this the school teachers and their parents should tell and equip them to the needed books additionally to their texts.

The second type of erroneous reasoning dealt with what is known as faulty interpretive status of evidence. Below is an example of such instances.

- As the data in table 2 indicates, all the respondents (sample size being 7) responded that 1) they do not encourage their learners to describe the process or the story of something talking in English 2) there is no debating club where the students are required to speak in English. From this one can conclude that students do not have good opportunity to practice spoken English.

The conclusion in the above example which states that students are not provided with opportunities for developing oral fluency is based on the erroneous reasoning that considers the existence of debating clubs and opportunities for certain activities such as describing a process or telling stories as the only condition necessary for success in speaking.

Relevance

Relevance refers to the value of the support material in realizing the purpose of convincing the reader about the validity of the claim or assertion made. Instances of errors of irrelevance included using wrong quotations to prove a point. The problem of including material which has little relevance to the purpose at hand is evident in parts of the research report intended to provide conclusions arrived at. It is not unusual to see a conclusion stated at the wrong level of generality. The result is that the reader is put in a situation where s/he loses track of the salient points as the conclusion is stuffed with specifics which

do not deserve to be treated as evidentiary material for making concluding remarks. The following excerpt contains such instance.

- This problem is significant and worth discussing. It is on this basis that Tesfaye Horeta, Kotobe College of Teacher Education 1990 E.C. wrote his senior essay on the title Testing Techniques and content validity in Bole Secondary School at Grade Eleven. And this paper attempts to investigate the extent to which teacher-made tests are reliable and valid in accordance with the pedagogic and psychological principle.

Avoidance of some major issues was usually associated with the tendency to include material that has nothing to do with the paper.

Accuracy

Instances of lack of accuracy were noted on several occasions. The problem of providing an inaccurate account of support materials often involve misrepresenting data displayed in tabular forms. The following example contains a text in which the data in the table have not been faithfully described. For instance, following a table containing data on teachers' views about the value of group work in enhancing the development of communicative competence where 3 teachers said "to a greater extent" while 4 replied 'to some extent', the writer puts the following text:

- In table 10, the need for organising in groups, pairs and team work have showed different views to this respect. Here also on the above table 57% of the respondents responded students group usefulness in the degree of to some extent. But 42.9% respond its usefulness to a high extent. This variation in a school do not equally benefit learners of the same school in the communicative language teaching.

Adequacy of Evidentiary Material

The support materials used in the sample research reports were also assessed with a view to determining their sufficiency and identifying possible gaps in developing a given proposition. The analysis led to the identification of errors of omission and commission. Errors of omission involved failure to include evidentiary support material which is likely to bring home the main point discussed. Errors of commission, on the other hand, involved the inclusion of material which has little or no significance in terms of amplifying or proving a given point.

The following kinds of omission were identified. Paragraphs were not adequately developed in the sense that little effort was made to include some flesh to the skeleton of a paragraph announcing the main proposition with the result that it is difficult to follow the train of thought of the writer. The examples that follow were, for instance, treated as complete paragraph.

- However, it should be noted that students involvement in group discussion and their level of participation can be affected by their cultural background
- At the present times, English language teaching is given a big attention to improve the ability of the Ethiopian high school students in using the language more properly. Considerable works have been done in providing better opportunities for students' acquisition of communicative competence.

Some important aspects of the study reported were glossed over; aspects which were not often treated at a level of detail they normally deserve included the design of the study, the data gathering tools and how they were used to generate the required data. Omission of relevant information also occurred in several parts of the reports. A common gap observed involved reference to some material (eg. an item in a questionnaire) to which the reader has no access or which is

placed in the remotest parts of the text. Examples included reference to questionnaire items in a rather vague fashion and without mention of what issue they addressed. Thus, it is not uncommon to come across sentences such as *Teachers responses to items 15 and 16 of the questionnaire; According to the students responses to item 5 of the questionnaire*. The reader is denied important information which should be immediately available, it is either withheld or the reader is constantly referred to the appendix for information about what the item dealt with. Such poor style not only usually rendered the report reader - unfriendly but also made a strong demand on the reader's memory. The gaps that were created thus also interrupted the flow by unduly injecting unnecessary cross references that made reading very difficult.

Other forms of omission included evading a central issue, providing a sketchy account of some major aspect of a study as well as failure to comment on direct quotations from the literature. It is often the case that the chapter on relevant literature was often made up of a catalogue of quotations which in most cases went uncommented on.

Errors of commission refers to difficulties that are attributable to the inclusion of material considered of no relevance to a given purpose. Errors of commission take several forms ranging from the use of titles in citations to forcing a wrong quotation into a text. There was also a tendency for students to inject direct quotes from the literature when the quotes are actually only remotely related to the central issue addressed by their study. This is likely to happen when the source is from a significant person in the field or when they feel that citing a particular piece of work will appease the advisor who they think is associated with the work in some way.

Manner of Presentation

A quick look at the works analysed reveals that the reports contained numerous instances of failure to meet the basic requirements of a research report in terms of style, language and organization. For the

purpose of this paper, however, the study concentrates on errors in using acceptable format and difficulties in organizing material in a sensible order.

Errors in Format: Although the notion of format in the context of writing a research report covers a wide range of components, effort was made to deal with the problems observed in citing the works of other people. Below are some of the major weaknesses identified.

Citations usually contained unnecessary information in the sense that they violated the convention that requires certain standard information in a specific order. The following example comes from a senior essay that sought to investigate the quality of tests written by high school teachers. In an attempt to convince the reader that the problem deserves some systematic investigation, the student offers the following evidence.

- The problem is significant and worth discussing. It is on this basis that Tesfaye Horota, Kotobe College of Teacher Education 1990 E.C, wrote his senior essay on the title Testing Techniques and content validity in Bole Senior secondary School at Grade Eleven. And this paper attempts to investigate the extent to which teacher made tests are reliable and valid in accordance with the pedagogical and psychological principle.

Although it is against the standard practice, students tend to include titles such as Dr. and Professor in their citations. They appear to be more likely to do so when they are referring to a piece of work produced by somebody they know or from AAU, where they were studying as shown in the example below:.

- More precisely Dr Marew Zewdie (2001:27-28) has mentioned the types of activities that enhance the speaking practice in classroom as follows.

Another violation of the standard practice concerns the tendency to include names which are normally left out.

- In their popular work Jack C.R and Theodore C.R (1986)
- Lado, R (1962:339) suggests that

A further problem in making a reference to a certain piece involves referring to female writers using masculine terms.

-Nunan (1989). She comments on this
- Laresen-Freeman () in his book.

Apparently, this is attributable to lack of familiarity with the culture from which the writer comes. What is interesting about this kind of error is that female writers are more likely to be described using a masculine pronoun. In fact, there was only one instance in the data where a male writer was referred to as a female by mistake.

Poor Organization

The following are some of the problems observed as far as organising material is concerned. First, the arrangement of the material appeared to be more arbitrary. This difficulty was observed at various levels ranging from faulty sequence of sentences to the wrong order in which different sections of the report are presented. The problem of lack of coherence took different forms. At the level of sections, discussions about the significance of a study came before statement of objective. Similarly, there were occasions where specific research questions were followed by another sub-section dealing with broad objectives of the study. There were also several instances of mis-positioning of information. In most cases, information which should appear earlier is unduly withheld until the final pages of the report. For instance, in one report which lasted 45 pages, information about sample size i.e the following information (*among 594 students 60 are randomly selected for the study*) came as a surprise on page 40, just before a new section entitled *conclusion*. Further, manifestations of poor organization include the following:

- failure to introduce and comment on direct quote;

- using the wrong quotation to support a claim;
- abandoning original issue and providing data on something else;
- presenting data at one go instead of breaking it up and interspersing it in the text;
- remote referencing.

Still a further problem which appeared to be very much widespread concerns failure to provide a link between various parts of the report. Transitions were seldom used. It is a common practice for a chapter or section to come to an abrupt end. Chapters ended with tables which are sometimes not described or commented on; sections and chapters ended with quotations again not accompanied by comments; tables which uninterruptedly run pages after pages formed the conclusions of sections and chapters.

Reference to data in tables is done in a manner which is totally irritating. A table containing data may be mentioned for the first time after nine pages. Statistics often go undescribed.

Conclusion

It seems that research reports produced by senior undergraduates suffer from deficiencies. Some of the difficulties observed in the study are attributable of lack of mastery of the basic skills of writing. The fact that students are unable to demonstrate a reasonable degree of proficiency in writing and knowledge of the major features of written communication after being offered a series of courses including intermediate and advanced courses in writing is a cause for concern. It is also disturbing to see that the students join and later leave the university without reaching the threshold level in the sense that the basic ingredients of effective written communication such as coherence, completeness and logical arrangement were missing in their work.

In addition to lack of mastery of the generic skills characterising competence in written expression which is evident in the substandard

nature of the reports analysed, some of the difficulties are attributable to lack of familiarity with and practice in generating a written form of communication known as report. Such gaps in the students competence in producing the genre known as research paper is evident in their failure to comply with the standard format of the report and other aspects of report generation including the use of visuals to present data.

The conclusion is that we do not seem to be providing the right kind of assistance. Considering the fact that the reports were produced by students majoring in English, one could imagine how gloomy the picture may be elsewhere especially in departments where students are expected to write up their work using the knowledge and skills they have gained from a couple of general or common courses offered at the freshman and sophomore level, as required by the old curriculum

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