



The Implementation of Annotated Bibliography Writing to Improve Research-Based Writing Skills of English Education Students

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Abstract

In the study, the implementation of annotated bibliography writing is explored as the educational method for improving research writing skills for students in English Education courses. Writing based on research is perceived as one of the most difficult aspects for EFL learners, especially when it comes to source evaluation, gathering new knowledge, and creating well-structured research arguments in academic writing. In the study, which employed the methodological framework that included students' work on their own annotated bibliography analyses and interviews, it was found that research writing skills can be improved for students using the method of annotated bibliography writing as they gain abilities to successfully sum up research sources, assess their applicability and credibility, and combine ideas for research arguments. However, several factors, such as their limited capacity to understand complex research sources, produce appropriate research parodies, assess research methods, and combine sources for analytical arguments, worked against EFL learners, resulting in the production of research arguments in descriptive mode instead of using analysis.

Keywords: Annotated Bibliography; Academic Writing; Critical Thinking; EFL Students; Research-Based Writing

Introduction

Research-based writing is an integral educational competency for students pursuing English Education because it encompasses the ability to critically read, analyze and evaluate research literature, synthesize ideas, and present evidence-supported arguments. This competency is crucial not only in the educational setting but also essential in future professional and research-based environments.

Research-based writing, however, is a daunting activity for most English Foreign Language (EFL) learners. This is because students mostly find it difficult to identify research-based literature, synthesize findings, and stay objectively focused while writing. This makes most students' writing descriptive instead of analytical.

Observations made by other researchers have suggested a lack of ease in academic writing skills among EFL learners. Mantra & Widiastuti (2019) suggested that a lack of grammar ability, structure, and development skills impacts students' capacity to coherently organize logically academic writings. Moreover, Mulyono (2021) found that students still need sufficient guidance and support to fully benefit from annotated bibliography assignments, even when these tasks are incorporated into academic writing courses.

Among the teaching methods that have emerged for academic writing in the literature is annotated bibliography assignment. Annotated bibliography assignments not only ask students to interpret their sources but also to critically analyze the significance, authenticity, and contribution of the source to the subject matter of the research. Using this method, students are encouraged to critically analyze academic texts and gain familiarity with the conventions for research. According to Merkle (2022), this assignment encourages students to develop a conceptual basis for their research by noting the research gaps, the strengths and limitations of the methodological approaches, and the intertextuality of the source material for research.

Despite the advantages of annotated bibliography writing, there have also been findings in previous research that suggest students lack explicit guidance in order to make the most out of bibliography writing. According to Mulyono (2021), without proper support and feedback, students usually perform the task in a way that emphasizes mere summary. This means there are gaps in research about bibliography writing in relation to the development of research-based writings among students.

Accordingly, the purpose of the current study is to investigate the role of annotated bibliography writing in developing research-based writing skills of English Education students. The study will analyze the written annotated bibliographies and the reflection writings of the participants to gain an insightful understanding of the positive and negative implications of the teaching tool within the EFL academic writing environment.

Method

This research used a qualitative methodology. A qualitative descriptive method was considered suitable because the research aimed to provide a rich, detailed description of how students improved their research-based writing through annotated bibliographies. The study adopted two interrelated designs. In line with this methodological orientation, the design of the study was content

analysis and interview. This design was chosen because the data consisted of written documents, specifically, an annotated bibliography in Research and Publication Discourse.

Semi-structured interviews were used to explore students' perceptions, experiences, and challenges in writing annotated bibliographies. As Creswell and Poth (2018) explain, interviews allow researchers to capture participants' subjective insights that cannot be fully represented through written texts.

Participants and Data Sources

The subjects of the study were seventh-semester students taking the Research and Publication Discourse course at the English Education study program of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta. The main data were in the form of annotated bibliographies of 15 students written in English and turned in as part of the course requirements. These were chosen using purposive sampling.

To supplement the analysis of the document, the researcher chose to carry out semi-structured interviews on three students from the same group. The candidates for the interview had differing levels of writing skills to ensure that the researcher gathered data from all levels. The two approaches provided the researcher with information to supplement the understanding of the development of the students' research-based writing skills.

Research Instruments

In qualitative research, the main instrument is the researcher, since the researcher is the one who collects, interprets, and analyzes the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). When it comes to this particular investigation, the researcher serves as the main instrument. This individual is accountable for recognizing, coding, and interpreting the logical sentence construction that is present in the discussion portions of undergraduate theses. Two secondary instruments supporting systematic analysis are the analytic rubric and interview guide.

This analytic rubric was developed based on theories of academic writing and research discourse. The focus in the development of an annotated bibliography rested on four key features of the writing: content understanding, critical evaluation of sources, integration of sources, and organization and coherence. Clear criteria were given for the assessment of students' written work with consistency.

The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions prepared to probe into students' experiences with writing annotated bibliographies, the strategies they used, the difficulties encountered, and perceptions of how it had influenced their research-based writing skills.

The rubric contains:

Aspect	Indicator	4 (Excellent)	3 (Good)	2 (Fair)	1 (Poor)
Content Understanding	Accuracy and relevance of the summary to the original source	Demonstrates complete and accurate understanding of the source; all key ideas are clearly summarized and relevant	Shows good understanding of the source with minor inaccuracies or omissions	Demonstrates partial understanding; some key points are missing or unclear	Lacks understanding of the source; summary is inaccurate or irrelevant
Critical Evaluation	Depth of evaluation and reflection toward the source	Provides insightful, critical evaluation; identifies strengths, weaknesses, and relevance of the source with clear justification	Offers adequate evaluation with limited critical reflection or justification	Evaluation is superficial; lacks reasoning or balance	No evaluation or critical reflection is evident
Integration of Sources	Ability to synthesize and connect sources in research writing	Integrates sources effectively and coherently; shows strong synthesis and clear linkage to research topic	Integrates most sources adequately; some synthesis is present but may lack consistency	Limited integration; sources are mentioned but not synthesized effectively	No integration; sources are listed or used randomly without connection

Organization and Coherence	Logical flow and structure of ideas	Writing is well-organized, coherent, and flows logically with clear transitions between ideas	Organization is generally clear but minor lapses in coherence occur	Organization is weak; ideas appear disconnected or inconsistent	Disorganized and incoherent; lacks clear structure or transitions
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The interview guide contains:

No.	Criteria	Questions
1.	Background and Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can you describe your experience in writing an annotated bibliography for your academic assignments or research projects? - How often have you been asked to write an annotated bibliography during your study in the English Education Department? - What was your first impression when you learned about annotated bibliography writing?
2.	Understanding and Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How do you usually select and evaluate sources for your annotated bibliography? - What structure or format do you follow when writing your annotations? - How do you summarize and analyze the information from each source in your own words? - What difficulties did you

		encounter when writing annotations, such as summarizing, evaluating, or synthesizing sources?
3.	Skills and Learning Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In your opinion, how does writing annotated bibliographies help you improve your research-based writing skills? - Do you think annotated bibliography writing improves your critical thinking or academic reading ability? If yes, how? - Can you describe any improvements you have noticed in your writing after practicing annotated bibliography tasks?
4.	Reflection and Perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How useful do you find annotated bibliography writing for preparing research papers or theses? -What aspects of annotated bibliography writing do you find most challenging? - What kind of feedback or guidance do you think helps you improve your annotated bibliography writing? - If you were to suggest improvements in teaching annotated bibliography writing, what would you recommend?

Technique of Data Collection

The data for this study were collected through document analysis, focusing on the annotated bibliographies written by students of the English Education Department. Document analysis is appropriate for Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) because it allows the researcher to systematically examine written texts to identify categories and patterns (Schreier, 2021).

The data collection procedure followed several systematic steps to ensure accuracy and relevance of the data. Researchers applied specific inclusion criteria in selecting documents for this study. These criteria were established to ensure that the selected documents were relevant, appropriate, and aligned with the objectives of the research. Annotated bibliographies were submitted and approved in Research and Publication week 2. Written in English by students of the English Education Department. Containing a combination of annotated bibliography. From the available theses, a purposive sampling technique was employed to select representative samples. Purposive sampling is effective in qualitative research because it ensures that the data are information-rich and relevant to the research focus. Extraction and conversion into digital text format were performed on the annotated bibliographies. For the purpose of maintaining confidentiality and facilitating systematic analysis, a code was assigned to each annotated bibliography (for example, AB1, AB2, AB3, etc).

Each of the annotated bibliographies was translated into text form using a coding system (AB1 to AB15) to ensure anonymity. For the interview component, three individuals participated in the online interviews using a semi-structured interviewing technique. Each interview lasted about ten minutes, was recorded using voice recording consent by the participants, transcribed verbatim, and then coded (INT1 to INT3).

Technique of Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of organizing, reducing, and interpreting data in order to make meaningful conclusions that address the research objectives (Miles et al., 2014). This investigation analyzed how students in the English Education Department formulate logical sentences in the discussion sections of their undergraduate theses. According to Schreier, M. (2021) the instrument for data collection in qualitative content analysis is chosen by the researcher to collect data systematically and efficiently. Therefore, the data collection procedures of this research are divided into several steps and can be seen in the table below:

No	Step	Description
1	Determine the object of the data	The researcher collects annotated bibliography; combination annotated bibliography.

2	Perusing	The researcher studies the texts that will be collected in great detail and on several occasions in order to become familiar with both the content and the context.
3	Highlighting	Important words, phrases, or sentences related to the research focus are marked to capture meaningful segments of the text.
4	Eliciting	Key ideas, themes, or patterns are drawn out from the highlighted parts, ensuring they are relevant to the research question.
5	Grouping/Classifying	Similar ideas or patterns are grouped together and classified into preliminary categories or themes.
6	Tabulating	The classified data are organized systemically in tables or matrices to facilitate comparison and analysis.
7	Coding	Each unit of data is assigned a code the represents its category or theme, forming basis for deeper interpretation and analysis.

Qualitative content analysis was used to analyze the annotated bibliographies. The process involved multiple reading of the texts to achieve familiarity, identifying meaningful units at sentence level, and coding according to the criteria of the rubric. Data from the coded data were then grouped into categories that reflected students' strengths and challenges in research-based writing.

Data were analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework of thematic analysis: becoming familiar with the data, initial coding, developing themes, reviewing themes, and finally, theme interpretation. The codes identified some main themes related to perceived benefits, writing challenges, and the development of critical thinking.

Triangulation

To ensure the credibility and validity of the findings, this study employs method and data triangulation by integrating content analysis and semi-structured interviews. Through triangulation, researchers verifies whether the results obtained from students' written annotated bibliographies align with their personal reflections and experiences. The process begins by analyzing each data source independently: annotated bibliographies are coded using the rubric criteria, while interview transcripts are thematically analyzed to identify patterns and themes. In order to determine areas of agreement (convergence) and areas of difference (divergence), the findings of both investigations are compared using a convergence matrix.

This convergence, for instance, strengthens the validity of the conclusion if

the document analysis reveals that there is minimal critical assessment, and if interview participants also communicate that they have trouble evaluating sources. Researchers on the other hand, reexamined both data sources and undertook member checking in order to explain interpretation in the event that a discrepancy occurs. For example, when students claim to analyze sources successfully but their annotated bibliographies demonstrate that they are not doing so.

In order to ensure that interpretations are supported by a multitude of sources of information, the method of triangulation is utilized. This, in turn, elevates the credibility, confirmability, and overall robustness of the findings that are derived from the study. It provides a more thorough understanding of the ways in which the creation of annotated bibliographies contributes to the development of research-based writing abilities among students, which is an additional advantage derived from this.

Trustworthiness

To ensure the reliability and rigor of the research, four criteria of trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, as proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), are applied. The credibility of the study had to be enhanced through the technique of data triangulation whereby the study relied on the analysis of documents and interviews. The technique of member validation also had to be applied to the study whereby the study had to revisit the data.

Results

This section presents the findings of the study based on qualitative content analysis of students' annotated bibliographies and thematic analysis of interview data. The results are organized according to the research questions to ensure clarity and coherence.

Results for Research Question 1:

How does annotated bibliography writing contribute to the development of students' research-based writing skills?

Analysis of the 15 annotated bibliographies indicates notable development in several components of research-based writing, particularly content understanding, source evaluation, integration of sources, and organization of ideas.

- *Improvement in Content Understanding*

Most of the students were able to identify and sum up the major ideas from academic sources correctly. Most of the annotations showed some level of understanding of the goals of the research, the findings, and the relevancy to the theories. Most of the students were able to distinguish between the major

arguments and the details.

One student noted in the interview:

“Writing annotations helped me focus on the main idea of each article instead of just copying information.”

- *Development of Critical Evaluation*

There was evidence of evaluative writing in many of the annotations, particularly in relation to students' comments on the relevance and usefulness of sources for their research topics. Some students directly dealt with the strengths and weaknesses of studies they surveyed, for instance, research design or scope. However, the extent to which students evaluatively wrote also differed.

Interview data support this finding, as one participant stated:

“I started to think about whether the article really fits my topic and why it is important.”

- *Integration Sources*

Some of the annotated bibliographies revealed the development of synthesis skills. The students were able to link concepts together by comparing the outcomes or matching the concepts to their area of research. The annotations revealed an attempt to approach synthesis by going beyond the isolated summaries to an integrated understanding.

- *Organization and Coherence*

The structure of the annotations was very organized, usually consisting of a short summary and then comments or reactions. The way in which ideas were organized in the annotations also improved, making it easier to track the students' logic.

Results for Research Question 2:

What challenges do students experience when writing annotated bibliographies?

Despite the observed improvements, the analysis also revealed persistent challenges that affected students' research-based writing performance.

- *Difficulty Understanding Academic Texts*

It has been noticed that many students faced issues in making sense out of highly academic language, theoretical ideas, and complicated descriptions related to methodologies. This deficiency had an impact on summarization and evaluation, especially when it came to dealing with highly specialized research

papers.

One interview participant explained:

“Sometimes I understand the topic, but the language is too difficult, so I’m not confident to evaluate the article.”

- *Limited Critical Evaluation*

Even though some of the notes had evaluative points, some students were finding it difficult to critically evaluate the research method, integrity of the data, or scholarship. This resulted in a generalized review.

- *Challenges in Paraphrasing and Summarizing*

Students commonly complained about being unable to paraphrase academic texts. Sometimes, their annotations contained quotes from the source or merely summarized source information with no further analysis.

- *Weak Synthesis Across Sources*

Although it was possible to summarize information from specific sources, it was difficult to combine several sources into a unified analytical view. In most annotation comments, the sources were presented separately without making a direct connection between them or between them and the general research thesis.

One student reflected:

“I know the articles are related, but connecting them in one explanation is still hard for me.”

- *Time and Cognitive Load*

The students commented that it was a time-consuming activity involving a high cognitive load with regards to the amount of reading involved. This meant there were few opportunities for further consideration.

Thus, the overall outcome of the study indicates that the process of annotated bibliography writing is useful for the development of research-based writing skills because it enables the students to better understand readings, organize their ideas, and undertake basic level evaluation. However, the limitations associated with the comprehension of readings, critical evaluation, paraphrasing, and synthesis still remain a barrier for the students for undertaking analytical writing.

Discussion

This paper investigated the implementation of writing annotated bibliographies as a pedagogical tool aimed at stimulating research-based writing skills of English Education majors. The results show that writing annotated bibliographies helps students improve their reading skills at an academic level but

at the same time reflect challenges that impede more analytical writing. This section discusses research findings and how they connect with existing research studies aimed at explaining implications of writing annotated bibliographies for an academic setting of writing skills.

Annotated Bibliography Writing as a Foundation for Research-Based Writing

The findings of this study demonstrate that annotated bibliography writing plays a crucial role in strengthening students' research-based writing skills, particularly in terms of content understanding, critical evaluation, and source integration. Through engagement with scholarly texts, students developed the ability to identify key arguments, understand research purposes, and recognize the relevance of sources to their research topics. These findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that annotated bibliographies enhance students' abilities to summarize, evaluate, and synthesize academic sources (Belcher, 2020; Lam & Law, 2020).

By working systematically with research literature, students gradually internalized academic writing conventions and analytical literacy, as emphasized by Li and Casanave (2012). The reviewed annotations show that students are able to correctly summarize complex academic sources. Writing annotated bibliographies develops students' ability to read critically, identify important issues, and write about it clearly. The writing rubric is useful for students to prepare their writing when writing academic papers so that the writing is good and complete (Nenotek, 2022).

Writing exercises were carried out by students so that they realized that annotated bibliographies require a deeper understanding, including evaluation, relevance analysis, and reflection. Writers need to provide evidence so that readers can trust the content of their writing, making it credible and valid (Dari, 2023). Content knowledge relates to the ideas that will be discussed in the writing. Systems knowledge includes understanding grammar and proper writing rules (Indah, 2017).

Annotated bibliographies develop critical thinking through evaluative reading and synthesis. Student reflections, such as learning to understand the relevance and strength of a source, indicate that students are beginning to think like researchers, not just readers of sources and compilers of summaries.

Development of Critical Reading and Evaluative Skills

Annotated bibliography writing also supported the development of students' critical reading and evaluative skills. Initially, many students experienced difficulty distinguishing between summarizing and critically evaluating sources, a challenge commonly faced by novice academic writers (Gilbert, 2018). However, with continued practice, students began to understand that annotation requires evaluative judgment rather than surface-level description. This progression aligns

with Hyland's (2022) academic literacy development model, which highlights that critical evaluation emerges through repeated exposure, guided practice, and reflection.

Research supports the idea that integrating AI-based writing tools can improve students' linguistic awareness and academic writing performance (Kohnke, Zou, & Zhang, 2023; Dwivedi et al., 2023). Critical reading skills are important in today's technological era because information and communication are rapidly evolving, and the amount of reading material available is increasing. For all the students, there was initial confusion on how and what annotated bibliographies were intended.

Supportive environments in peer discussion groups provide benefits, namely improving group work values in social-cognitive roles in the context of foreign language learning (Mulyono, 2021). Correction is a kind of feedback that helps students writing more clearly. Through this process, students learn about structures in their writing, which helps them think again and rewrite their sentences properly (Qirani, 2025).

Challenges in Source Evaluation and Synthesis

Despite observed improvements, students continued to face challenges in evaluating source credibility and synthesizing information across multiple texts. Many struggled to assess research quality, methodology, and relevance, reflecting findings by Head (2020) that undergraduate students often lack confidence in judging source reliability. These difficulties were further compounded by complex academic language and heavy reading demands, consistent with research on EFL academic literacy challenges (Hirano, 2015; Flowerdew & Wang, 2017). Limited synthesis skills restricted students' ability to construct cohesive academic arguments, supporting Wingate and Tribble's (2020) assertion that inadequate academic reading skills hinder effective argument development.

Students' confusion at the start indicates that structured learning, as Kitani (2025) indicated, is required. The development of critical thinking by means of annotation is in line with Merkle (2022). Challenges in synthesis support Shodieva's 2023 emphasis on how complex academic reading is. Further, the challenges faced while writing annotated bibliographies directly impact students' capabilities to build academic arguments.

Some students report difficulty understanding complex academic language. This challenge is consistent with Mantra & Widiastuti (2019), who argued that grammatical and mechanical proficiency limits students in their analytic writing. Therefore, poor reading comprehension makes summarization and evaluation challenging, leading to superficial annotating. Students struggle to summarize long articles efficiently without losing the main idea. In this respect, respondents pointed out the difficulty in "summarizing without losing the central idea." This is

a challenging area in EFL academic writing, where summarization or abstracting requires both comprehension and synthesis.

The Role of Practice, Scaffolding, and Feedback

The study highlights the importance of sustained practice, explicit scaffolding, and lecturer feedback in supporting students' research-based writing development. Students reported that limited exposure to annotated bibliography tasks reduced their confidence and consistency in applying analytical skills, corroborating Wingate's (2018) claim that infrequent practice weakens evaluative writing performance. The use of structured formats, such as the summary-evaluation-reflection model, provided helpful initial guidance, aligning with Bailey's (2018) recommendation for scaffolding novice researchers. Students agreed that annotated bibliography writing prepared them for larger research projects. This echoes findings by Bruce (2019), who demonstrated that annotated bibliographies serve as an effective bridge between reading and literature review writing. Moreover, targeted and explicit feedback from lecturers was identified as a critical factor in improving students' analytical and evaluative writing, echoing the findings of Bitchener and Ferris (2012).

Pedagogical Implications for EFL Academic Writing Instruction

Students' suggestions for increased guided practice, modeling, and collaborative discussion reflect established pedagogical approaches to teaching academic writing (Hyland & Shaw, 2016). The progression from initial confusion to greater confidence observed in this study mirrors patterns described in academic literacy acquisition research, where structured guidance and feedback support the development of higher-order writing skills (Belcher, 2020; Hyland, 2022). Strategies to improve academic writing skills include activities that help students think better, understand academic topics, solve problems, and come up with new ideas. These activities help students write more clearly and express their thoughts effectively (Nurdianingsih, 2024).

Conclusion

This research examined the implementation of annotated bibliography writing to improve research writing competency among English Education students in the context of EFL. Results show that the process of writing an annotated bibliography aids students in comprehending research literature, determining the relevance of information, and synthesizing ideas to build research-based arguments. Research practices have helped students develop familiarity with research writing norms and analytical writing techniques through readings of research literature.

Nevertheless, with all these advantages, the students continued struggling with reading complicated texts, assessing the validity of research, paraphrasing

meanings, and combining several sources. Such concerns culminated in the students producing descriptions as opposed to analyses, especially when they were less familiar with annotated bibliographies.

A part of the literature suggests that the writing of the annotated bibliography needs to be incorporated into the curriculum in the form of modeling, scaffolding, and observation of students, thus serving as a building block for a bigger piece of research, such as a literature review and undergraduate thesis. Unfortunately, this study had a limited sample and setting. Future research can address long-term consequences of teaching annotated bibliography and its application in general EFL contexts. In general, it can be seen that the results demonstrate the importance of writing annotated bibliography for research-based writing and building academic literacy in EFL contexts.

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