

Challenges of Integrating Academic Sources in Assessed Assignments: A Case of Arab EFL Learners

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Abstract

Integration of academic sources is an essential component of academic writing. It adds authenticity to the work, indicates that the student has read extensively, and upholds academic integrity of the written piece. However, according to the author's experience of teaching undergraduate level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, using academic sources and citing references effectively is one of the most daunting features of academic writing. Therefore, this study investigates the challenges faced by students in citing academic sources while composing research based reports and, by the same token, the reasons behind them. It also considers teachers' observations about these challenges and the strategies that can be adopted to support students. A mixed method approach was used where data were collected through student questionnaires, student focus groups, interviews with faculty members, and students' assignment reports. The participants included 97 undergraduate-level Engineering students enrolled in three sessions of an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course called *Communication Skills*. The paper reports on the details of the research-based assignment and the measures used by the author to support students in integrating sources in the report. It was observed that the students found integration of academic sources as the most problematic requirements and features of the assignment. The data revealed that these challenges are direct consequences of students' linguistic backgrounds; lack of appropriate writing skills; difficulty in comprehending articles due to the technical jargon used; and high word count of the academic papers. In response to that, the author strongly recommends the incorporation of academic literacies in the curricula of specialist courses as well as prompt, closer collaboration between language instructors and subject specialists. Though this study was limited to the students of a specific course, it is hoped that the findings will help other EFL and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) instructors apprehend the crux of the issue and devise effective strategies to overcome the above-mentioned challenge.

Key words: academic sources; academic writing; source integration; English language Proficiency

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