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Errors and Expectations: Addressing the Challenges of Graduate Writing in Tribhuvan University, Nepal

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Abstract

As teachers working with students for whom English is a second language, we consistently face numerous challenges related to language use in academic writing, particularly among graduate students in the Humanities and Social Sciences at Tribhuvan University (TU). A shared struggle of students is evident in meeting basic language requirements of the graduate writing due to their limited writing experience and inadequate exposure to the theoretical foundations of the language of academic writing. Drawing from my own experience of assisting students in their writing, supervising them in their thesis writing, and teaching writing courses over a decade, in this paper, I aim to identify and address some of the most common and recurring language issues that students encounter. The theoretical concepts of error explored in this paper are grounded in the discipline of composition studies, shaped by the contributions of eminent scholars and their works such as Mina P. Shaughnessy's Errors and Expectations*, David Bartholomae's* "The Study of Error," *and Joseph M. Williams'* "The Phenomenology of Error." *In this paper, I employ an autoethnographic account as a methodology for identifying major concerns of 'errors' and providing accompanying examples. While no predetermined rules can govern academic language, this paper selects some of the important characteristic features of academic language in the form of a guideline. Through the proposed guidelines, if taken into consideration, student writers will be able to empower themselves in navigating the concept of 'errors' and addressing the 'expectations' of academic writing conventions in the university settings. Exploring this topic in the context of graduate writing at TU, this paper argues that the challenges of graduate writers in their writing process can be mitigated through consorted effort of the instructors with the tool of a working guideline as discussed in the paper.*

Keywords: graduate writing, Tribhuvan University, writing conventions, errors and expectations, writing process

Department of English, Mahendra Multiple Campus, Dharan, Tribhuvan University, Nepal

Introduction

The ideas explored in this paper are related to basic writers and their commonly experienced issues and concerns. I situate them in the scholarly discussion of the discourse community who theorize and practice "basic writing," "errors," and "academic expectations." To define a 'basic writer,' I draw upon Mina P. Shaughnessy who uses the terms "basic writing" and "basic writers" "to describe inexperienced writers as underprepared students, replacing common views of supposed mental, social, and linguistic disabilities with information about the logic of all composing and the regularity of non-standard written forms" (Miller 387). In this paper, I adopt the terms "basic writers" and "basic writings," as Shaughnessy, to refer to graduate student writers and their writings in the context of the writing curriculum at TU. It is here important to note that the students' context in Shaughnessy's work and the students discussed in this paper are relatable but are significantly different as well. Shaughnessy writes in the context to address the unique needs of the students at The City University of New York in the 1970s, particularly those who were admitted after being out of the college education and were considered 'underprepared'. The context of the students to whom I localize Shaughnessy's ideas is partly similar in the sense that they, too, are 'underprepared' for academic writing. However, it differs in that English is not their first language.

Methodology, Research Questions, and Objectives

Similar to Shaughnessy, my heightened awareness of language challenges faced by student writers has evolved through my teaching experiences in writing courses at TU. This awareness serves as the primary foundation for the areas of concern discussed in this article. This autoethnographic account relies on informal data concerning the language of academic writing derived from the three major sources. Firstly, in the course of classroom activities, assignments, and one-on-one conferences with students, I identified students' struggles in effectively articulating ideas within academic writing conventions. Secondly, I noticed my colleagues often expressing their frustration, occasionally impatiently, when confronted with students' works that they deemed as 'bad writing' for their unintelligibility. Thirdly, as a writer within the community of English as a second language, I encountered that proficiency in the English language as an indicator of success in conveying ideas effectively and efficiently, especially in overcoming gatekeeping practices in academic institutional settings. Drawing from these sources, I have engaged in scholarly conversations to address the following research questions:

Department of English, Mahendra Multiple Campus, Dharan, Tribhuvan University, Nepal

(a) What specific areas of specific concern related to errors frequently arise in the academic writings of basic writers at TU?

(b) How can the instructors address these concerns to enhance success of the students in writing courses?

The primary objective of this undertaking is to investigate a potential set of guidelines that students can consider when completing writing assignments in their academic exigencies. Additionally, it aims to raise awareness among basic writers about what constitutes errors and the expectations inherent in academic writing practices within university communities. To achieve this, I have consulted seminal sources on the topic, accessed through the University of Texas at El Paso's library database, utilizing keywords like 'basic writers,' 'basic writings,' 'errors,' 'expectations,' 'academic writing,' and 'writing conventions.' This methodology also forms as an integral part of this paper.

Situating the Conversation into the Related Scholarship

It is inaccurate to characterize basic writers as "slow or non-verbal, indifferent to or incapable of academic excellence, but because they are beginners and must, like all beginners, learn by making mistakes" (Shaughnessy 390). Writing instructors, therefore, need to consider students' errors as challenges but not as signs of incompetency. I have presented examples of challenges in the discussion section below as a tool for students to learn through illustrations. Because, in dealing with errors, Shaughnessy also underscores the efficacy of using examples, stating, "I have done this in part to suggest that the problem I am naming occurs in a variety of contexts but also because I see a value to being immersed in examples" (390).

Through writing practices, student writers begin to explore conventions of writing, characteristics of academic writing, and expectations of the discourse community. Such practices gradually make the basic writers compelling to view writing as something that has an impactful effect beyond their comfort zones. Bartholomae defines these efforts as a way of 'inventing university' wherein students embark on the understanding of what it means to be 'a writer.' Student writers also need to be aware of the fact that every piece of writing they produce is subject to the expectations of the community. According to him, students in the university are "required to speak of . . . [their] experience in our [i.e., institution's] terms; it would, that is, have required a special vocabulary, a special system of presentation, and an interpretive scheme" (608). Over time, they also come to understand the rhetorical situation, which involves: the author, audience, purpose, text, structure, style, and occasion. These writers then realize that maintaining an integral relationship among these elements, unless their writing is experimental, requires adhering to the shared principles and conventions practiced by

the members of the academic community. Effective communication between student writers and their intended readers hinges on their language being acceptable to this community. Additionally, they must recognize that minimizing glaring errors is essential to enhance their writing's communicative efficiency.

When addressing errors in writing, many scholars have offered their perspectives and practical guidelines. A plethora of handbooks is dedicated to prescribing 'rules' of standard language and styles. These include works such as S. J. Reisman's *A Style Manual for Technical Writers and Editors* (1972), Jacques Barzun's *Simple and Direct* (1976), Sylvan Barnet and Marcia Stubbs' *Practical Guide to Writing* (1977), Adrian Wallwork's *English for Writing Research Papers* (2011), Michael Swan's *Practical English Usage* (2016), and many more. This list is indeed exhaustive. In this paper, my literature review centers on the concept of 'errors and expectation' as discussed in the works of Mina P. Shaughnessy, David Bartholomae, and Joseph M. Williams. I also draw upon Wallwork's *English for Writing Research Papers* to provide illustrative examples that align with the style components discussed below.

Regarding errors, Shaughnessy contends that basic writers frequently grapple with an intense fear of making mistakes during their writing process. She asserts "Some writers, inhibited by their fear of error, produce but a few lines an hour or keep trying to begin, crossing out one try after another until the sentence is hopelessly tangled" (391). Additionally, she argues that these writers tend to conflate 'good writing' with 'correct writing' (391). Furthermore, she identifies three situations that arise as a result of the frequent errors students make in their writing:

> First, . . . most college teachers have little tolerance for the kinds of errors BW [Basic Writers] . . . make . . . Second, there is the urgency of the students to meet their teachers' criteria. . . Third, there is the awareness of the teacher and administrator that remedial programs are likely to be evaluated (and budgeted) according to the speed with which they produce correct writers, correctness being a highly measurable feature of acceptable writing. (392)

Shaughnessy further contends that some writing teachers are likely to react to these situations with complacency, downplaying the significance of errors while emphasizing the importance of content or ideas in their papers. However, such an approach, as she points out, "leaves no room for . . . refinements of usage . . ." (392). Hence, there is a pressing need for concerted efforts to bring about changes. Students frequently make such errors also because of their exposure to various forms of language through their schooling, television, radio, films, advertisements, casual conversations, and more. In

the context of the students I am addressing, they also tend to have a habit of incorporating English words into the underlying structure and grammar of the Nepali language. Regardless of the reasons, these circumstances frequently leave students in a state of diction choice complexity, making it a challenge for them to differentiate between what is correct and what is erroneous.

Throughout her book, Shaughnessy's prima facie concern is to help writing teachers in understanding "the logic of errors" in students' writing. This concept is rooted in her belief that writing is a transaction in which "the speaker or writer wants to say what he has to say with as little energy as possible and the listener or reader wants to understand with as little energy as possible" (394). Due to this potential transactional pretension and complexity, the role of writing teachers is to facilitate the effective and efficient transfer of meaning from the student writers to the readers. My purpose in this article also aligns with hers as it aims to provide students with some strategies for enhancing their effective writing skills.

Another seminal article addressing the issue of error is Bartholomae's "The Study of Error." To understand his perspective on error, it is essential first to understand how he defines basic writers. According to him, basic writers are "beginning writers", to be sure, but they are not writers who need to learn to use language. They are writers who need "to learn to command a particular variety of language ─ the language of a written, academic discourse ─ and a particular variety of language use ─ writing itself" (254). Essentially, he emphasizes the importance of these student writers becoming acquainted with "conventionally written discourse" (254).

Furthermore, Bartholomae defines 'errors' as basic writers' violations of the expectations held by the academic discourse community. When writing teachers come across such deviations, they often become bewilderingly distressed. He argues that "[w]hen a basic writer violates our expectations, however, there is a tendency to dismiss the text as non-writing, as meaningless or imperfect writing" (254). His critique extends to the practices of writing teachers: "[w]e have not read as we have been trained to read, with a particular interest in the way an individual style confronts and violates convention. We have read, rather, as policemen, examiners, gate-keepers" (255). When addressing the errors made by basic writers, Bartholomae refers to them as deviations or idiosyncrasies and suggests writing instructors work with the patterns in them. When they find the pattern of errors or help students to find it, the process of addressing them becomes easier. He further argues that rather than merely dismissing the errors, instructors should scrutinize them 'seriously' so that they can understand the struggle of students in depth. His focus on this approach is explicitly stated in the following statement:

Department of English, Mahendra Multiple Campus, Dharan, Tribhuvan University, Nepal

> Errors, then, are stylistic features, information about this writer and this language; they are not necessarily 'noise' in the system, accidents of composing, or malfunctions in the language process. Consequently, we cannot identify errors without identifying them in context, and the context is not the text, but the activity of composing that presented the erroneous form as a possible solution to the problem of making a meaningful statement. (257)

Bartholomae emphasizes the urgency of taking the works of each basic writer seriously because errors have their logic and can be meaningful. He views these writers as active learners and their errors as the natural part of their writing. As active learners, they can succeed in the journey through thorough guidance and assistance of the instructors. He argues that "error occurs [in basic writer's works] because the writer is an active, competent language user who uses his knowledge that language is rule-governed, and who uses his ability to predict and form analogies, to construct hypotheses that can make an irregular or unfamiliar language more manageable" (258). In essence, through practice, these writers can demonstrate their potential to transform the unfamiliar language of academic writing into something familiar and natural. He also suggests that writing teachers should adopt a bottom-up instead of a top-bottom approach to avoid discouraging the students from their errors. He argues that:

> We can begin our instruction with what a writer does rather than with what he fails to do. It makes no sense, for example, to impose lessons on the sentence on a student whose problems with syntax can be understood in more precise terms. It makes no sense to teach spelling to an individual who has trouble principally with words that contain vowel clusters. Error analysis, then, is a method of diagnosis. (258)

Bartholomae highlights the significance of diagnosing, which involves interpreting errors alongside the students themselves. He does not advocate for the imposition of corrections by teachers, which are usual practices in the context of TU as well, as this approach does not encourage students to recognize, for themselves, what is missing in their writings. He states:

> By having students share in the process of investigating and interpreting the patterns of error in their writing, we can help them begin to see those errors as evidence of hypotheses or strategies they have formed and, as a consequence, put them in a position to change, experiment, and imagine other strategies. Studying their writing puts students in a position to see themselves as language users, rather than as victims of a language that uses them. (258)

In this passage, Bartholomae aptly foregrounds the ways of empowering student writers by encouraging them to take the initiative in identifying and addressing their errors. In this process, he envisions keeping students in the role of active participants, transforming them into agents rather than passive recipients of the teachers' corrections.

Similarly, in "The Phenomenology of Errors" Joseph M. Williams probes into the complex nature of errors highlighting how they stem from the disparity between grammatical rules and practical usage, a phenomenon both common as well as puzzling. He contends that the concept of error in writing is entirely complex, as its definition and determination are contingent on subjective factors- 'what defines error' and 'who decides what an error is.' He sharply articulates these complexities and puzzles in the following statement:

> Well, it is very puzzling: Great variation in our definition of error, great variation in our emotional investment in defining and condemning error, great variation in the perceived seriousness of individual errors. The categories of error all seem like they should be yes-no, but the feelings associated with the categories seem much more complex. (417)

As with the difficulty of identifying and locating errors, responding to errors is also an exigent phenomenon. Williams observes: "Because error seems to exist in so many places, we should not be surprised that we do not agree among ourselves about how to identify it, or that we do not respond to the same error uniformly" (417). The complexity also arises in defining and responding errors because these are fundamentally "matters of style" (419). Drawing examples from George Orwell's critique of passive structures, Williams demonstrates the repeated use of passive structures (at least three times) within a short-quoted passage in the work of Orwell himself. He also references handbooks and style manuals to show how the rules 'prescribed' by the writers are often violated by themselves in the same texts.

After establishing the intricate nature of error, Williams proposes a way to define it. He identifies two key characteristic features of error: "We can discuss it at a level of consciousness that places that error at the very center of our consciousness. Or we can talk about how we experience (or not) what we popularly call errors of usage as they occur in the ordinary course of our reading a text" (420). According to him, first, the concept of error hinges on readers' conscious efforts while reading a text, second, it depends on the experiencing subject.

Therefore, errors are contingent and rely on the readers' or users' deliberate attempts and intentions of finding them. Williams concludes, "If we read any text the way we read freshmen essays, we will find many of the same kind of errors we

routinely expect to find and therefore do find. But if we could read those student essays unreflexively; if we could make the ordinary kind of contract with those texts that we make with other kinds of texts, then we could find many fewer errors" (420). After presenting these ideas, he concludes by claiming that a reader's "deliberate search" in his essay is also likely to uncover "incidentally, about 100 errors" (426).

In alignment with these concepts, student writers in the university context at TU encounter the conscious, deliberate, and intentional scrutiny of their instructors at several stages. Writers and researchers from Nepal also acknowledge that teaching writing is a challenge, particularly in "balancing multiple issues, such as content, organization, purpose, audience, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling, and mechanics" (Pandey 258). Similarly, Banshidhar Joshi identifies the challenge faced by student writers in Nepalese universities due to multilingualism. He argues that "that "contextualiz[ing] the content of the writing and . . . apply[ing it to] multilingual pedagogy like translanguaging in developing writing skill" (123) is a major concern for writing teachers. Such conversations boil down to a point that one of the fundamental aspects, among others, of the graduate writing at TU students is language.

Discussion

While the three scholars mentioned above primarily concentrate on rectifying errors mostly at the grammatical level, my approach builds upon theirs by probing into errors at broader levels. This discussion is particularly tailored for students within the framework of the curriculum and pedagogy of the graduate programs at TU. Specifically, I pinpoint cohesiveness, ethical considerations, precision, and language biases as potential domains of errors and expectations.

Cohesiveness

Cohesiveness is a crucial characteristic feature of academic writing. Student writers need to maintain it by creating integral relationships among different components of writing. This entails that each element of the text, including titles, subtitles, thesis statement, topic sentences, words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, ideas, details, as well as reasons and pieces of evidence, and all others must be integrally interconnected to each and the whole text in such a way that the absence any of these elements disrupt internal and organic links within the written piece. It is through this interconnectedness that readers can achieve coherence and a clear development of ideas. This, in turn, makes the transaction of conversation effective and efficient. Moreover, this interconnectedness not only enhances readability but also bolsters the author's credibility in their academic writing piece. Every piece of literature on academic writing also emphasizes the need for such cohesiveness. For

instance, John S. Creswell asserts that "coherence in writing means that ideas are logically tied together from one sentence to another and from one paragraph to the next" (83).

In academic writing, there can be two effective ways of maintaining coherence: one involves repeating specific variable names, while the other relies on using transitions. While teaching academic writing to graduate students at TU, I have notices that familiarizing students with a list of transitional words and encouraging them to employ them significantly can improve the readability of their writings. This approach also aided students in grasping the essential skills of developing their ideas logically and coherently. Rise B. Axelrod and Charles R. Cooper underscore the importance of such transition words for cohesive writing: "[A] transition, sometimes called a connective, serves as a bridge, connecting one paragraph, sentence, clause, or word with another. Not only does a transition signal a connection, but it also identifies the kind of connection by indicating to readers how the item preceding the transition relates to that which follows it" (413). The list below offers transitions to help basic writers maintain proper relationships between linguistic elements and ideas in their writing. Such transitions encompass transitions of logical relationships, temporal relationships, and spatial relationships:

Transitions of Logical Relationship

- To introduce another item in a series, use the transitions like: first, second, third..; for one thing …for another; then; next; moreover; in addition to; furthermore; finally; last; also; similarly; besides; as well as
- To introduce an opposing point, use the transitions like: but; however; yet; nevertheless; on the contrary; on the other hand; in contrast; still; neither…nor
- To illustrate, use the transitions like: for instance; that is; namely; for example; in particular
- To conclude, use the transitions like: finally; to sum up; to wrap up; hence; accordingly; therefore; thus
- To resume the original line of reasoning, use the transitions like: all the same; nonetheless; even though; still
- To introduce a restatement, use the transitions like: in other words; in simpler terms; that is; to put the issue differently

Transitions of Temporal Relationship

- To indicate the beginning, use the transitions like: at first; since; in the beginning; before; then
- To indicate the middle, use the transitions like: next; then; in the meantime; meanwhile; at that moment; at the same time; as it was happening; simultaneously
- To indicate the end, use the transitions like: eventually; finally; in the end; at last
- To indicate duration, use the transitions like: during; for a long time; after a while; for the time being; briefly
- To indicate a particular time, use the transitions like: in 2017; at the beginning of April; now; then; last Monday; in those days
- To indicate frequency, use the transitions like: occasionally; time and again; frequently; often; now and then

Transitions of Spatial Relationship

- To indicate direction, use the transitions like: along; across; behind; in front of; inside; outside; to the left or right; up or down
- To indicate closeness, use the transitions like: next; near; close to; alongside; next to; adjacent to
- To indicate distance, use the transitions like: far; beyond; away there; in the distance (Axelrod and Cooper 1121-23)

Ethical Considerations and Plagiarism

Ethical issues have become a pressing concern in students' academic writing today. This encompasses various unethical practices, such as blatant plagiarism, the inappropriate use of paraphrasing, the manipulation of other writers' ideas for personal gain, and many more. Basic writers, therefore, need to be familiar with the fact that they should always refrain from imitating, paraphrasing, or distorting the intended meaning of their sources. Sometimes, their ignorance of the plagiarism policies, even the knowledge of plagiarism, leads them to commit errors which is what needs to be taught in academic writing. Consequently, any information included in an in-text citation as evidence must faithfully preserve the essence of the source. The same principle applies when paraphrasing or summarizing. For maintaining ethics, Wayne C.

Booth, et al. have put forth this issue in the following recommendations for all researchers, including basic writers:

- Ethical researchers do not plagiarize or claim credit for the results of others.
- They do not misreport sources, invent data, or fake results.
- They do not submit data whose accuracy they don't trust; unless they say so.
- They do not conceal objections that they cannot rebut.
- They do not caricature or distort opposing views.
- They do not destroy data or conceal sources important for those who follow. (274)

Violation of ethical principles is considered a serious academic breach. Basic writers should also comply with the rules that transgressions lead to tarnishing their reputation and, in many instances, attract contempt and penalties from the academic authorities.

Avoiding Stereotypical Language

Maintaining ethics in academic writing also means avoiding stereotypical language. Such language often involves making sweeping generalizations about people, perpetuating long-standing, unfounded, and biased assumptions held by one group about another. Stereotyping can subject individuals to discrimination based on factors like race, caste, class, gender, nationality, and sexuality, among other identity markers. Stereotypes tend to treat people as members of groups and portray them as predictably uniform. It leads to serious injustice to individuals. To uphold ethical standards, it is important to steer clear of the following types of stereotypes:

- Muslims are orthodox or terrorists.
- White people are racists.
- Poor people do not want to work.
- Homosexuals are deviants.

In addition to stereotyping, a common issue among many student writers of TU is to have an undue ‘fascination’ toward non-Western writers and ‘antipathy’ towards Western writers. Often, they operate under their preconceived notions that every single Western writer consistently undermines the cultural values of non-Western societies, which is not true. As a result of this misconception, these basic writers simultaneously reinforce the existing stereotypes and also construct new ones. In both cases, students project their own biases of positionalities and subjectivities onto the subjects they write about.

Department of English, Mahendra Multiple Campus, Dharan, Tribhuvan University, Nepal

4.4 Being Concise

Academic writing involves focused and critical analysis of a subject. It demands precision in words and sentence choices. Some strategies for making academic language concise are as follows:

(i) **Prefer Verbs Over Nouns:**

- Original: X was used in the calculation of Y.

  Revised**:** X was used to calculate Y.

- X makes an analysis of a poem.

  Revised**:** X analyses a poem.

(ii) **Avoid Complex Vocabulary:** Many M.A. students at TU often mistakenly believe that the use of complex words makes their writing scholarly. However, they fail to recognize that effective academic writing is characterized by the precision of word choices, the depth of critical analysis, and the development of ideas. In contrast, the use of complex vocabulary tends to make them sound verbose, which can divert the readers' serious attention. Therefore, it is essential to help students understand that they can achieve their academic goals even with simple words, provided that their expressions are straightforward and clear.

(iii) **Be Economical with Words, Phrases, and Sentences:** In academic writing, language has to convey maximum ideas with minimal words. During the writing process, students should allocate more time to revision which provides an opportunity for them to eliminate unnecessary words and phrases, shorten convoluted sentences, restructure elements such as pairs, series, and compound subjects and predicates, and correct misused participles. Achieving conciseness involves replacing multiple words with a single, precise word. Basic writers also need to learn avoiding unnecessary repetitions, qualifiers, and intensifiers like 'rather,' 'very,' 'quite,' etc. Additionally, eliminating empty statements like 'the point that I am trying to make', 'it is not necessary to say that', 'it seems to me that', 'as a matter of fact', etc. can help to maintain the economy in language use. Consider the following ways to begin sentences:

Wordy	Concise
• Using my opinion, I want to say … believe……	I
• X wants to say more…… adds……..	X
• Due to the fact that…… because……	It is

(iv) **Avoid Contractions and Colloquial Expressions:** Contractions and colloquial writing or expressions typically occur in the informal writing context. Since academic writing is considered to be formal, the academic discourse community generally follows the conventions of formalities. As Palm Peters notes, colloquial expressions "undermine the serious effect you want to have on the writing . . . [and it] should not appear casual, imprecise or gloss over details" (77). Consider the difference between informal and formal tones in the following examples:

Contraction: Charles Dickens doesn't support unplanned urbanization.

Formal: Charles Dickens does not support unplanned urbanization.

Colloquial: It was raining cats and dogs.

Formal: It was raining heavily.

(v) **Remove Redundancy:** As stated earlier, the language of academic writing has to be concise. Unnecessary words or phrases (redundancies) should be eliminated. Consider the following expressions:

Original: It was big in size, white in color and heavy in weight.

Revised: It was big, white, and heavy.

Original: This will be done in the month of December for a period of six

days.

Revised**:** This will be done in December for six days.

(vi) **Prefer Active Voice:** Using active voice means 'making the grammatical subject of a sentence the doer of the action'. Sometimes it is essential for the basic writers to intervene and make them conscious of

the kind of difference in the meaning and the emphasis between the active and the passive voice. As Ross-Larson explains, "If the subject acts, the voice is active. If the subject is acted upon, the voice is passive" (9). Consider the difference in the following statements:

Passive: The interview was conducted in a controlled setting.

Active: We conducted the interview in a controlled setting.

Robert Keith Miller and Suzanne S. Webb also argue that "passive voice is wordier and also makes it possible to duck responsibility, reduce clarity'" (26). They substantiate this idea with an example:

Passive: Your bowl was broken.

Active**:** X broke your bowl.

(vii) **Prefer Simple Present Tense Whenever Possible:** In many cases, academic writings involve critical analysis and analytical language is best fit into the simple present tense. There may be instances where writers need to narrate past events as they occurred or imagine, or situate in the future. Apart from these exceptions, it is academic convention to prefer the universal present over the others. Moreover, unless there is a specific intention to shift between past and present, or a deliberate mixing of the two tenses, it is also advisable to maintain a consistent tense. Consider the differences between the past and the present in the following sentences:

Past**:** Plato believed that 'the world of ideas' was only the real.

Universal Present: Plato believes that 'the world of ideas' is the only real.

(viii) **Avoiding Clichés:** A cliché refers to an expression or idea that has been overused to the extent that it has lost its original meaning and becomes trite and irritating to the audience. I have experienced M.A. students at TU being habitual to the use of the expressions like "as we all know that….", "no need to say that…….", "we are living in twenty-first century that…." Such phrases or expressions not only make sentences clumsy; they also hinder the ideas to appear original and fresh and make them dull. Garrett M. Bauman aptly suggests, "[b]e ruthless to clichés [because] they are corpses in your living essays" (127).

(ix) **Reducing Biases and Ideologies:** Academic writings have to be free

from the biases and ideologies of the writers. This means, it requires the writers to refrain from implying or explicitly making passing judgments and take one-sided positions on the subjects they study or write about, which, I have found, the students often tend to do. Reducing biases and ideologies requires writers to be away from demeaning attitudes and assumptions about the people or the topic in the writing. Then a writer's position in terms of gender, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic group, disability, religion, nation, or age becomes neutral. In the case of research writing, a researcher is just a researcher but not, for instance, a Newar or a Tamang, a leftist or a rightist, a heterosexual or a homosexual, a male or a female, and the like. Unless they maintain this neutral position in their research, what they find will not be applicable beyond themselves. Their findings may not be credible and relevant to the outside world. For this purpose of reducing bias in research, *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* suggests the following recommendations:

(a) Describe at the Appropriate Level of Specificity.

Example: Prefer 'lesbians,' 'gay men,' 'bisexual men,' and 'bisexual women' in place of homosexuals.

(b) Be sensitive to Labels. Respect people's preferences by calling them what they prefer to be called.

Examples:

(c) Prefer specific category instead of the term like 'culturally deprived'.

Use 'husband and wife' for 'man and wife'.

(d) Do not categorize heterosexuals as normal and homosexuals as deviants.

(e) Acknowledge Participation.

Example: 'The students completed the survey' is preferable to 'The students were given the survey.'

(f) Use gender-free language.

Example: Prefer 'human beings' for 'men' to refer both men and women. (71-77)

Maintaining Political Correctness

Academic writing should respect individuals from all backgrounds and does not compromise the integrity of any person. Consider the following guidelines:

- Avoid the language that objectifies individuals based on their conditions. (Examples: neurotic, drug addict, autistic)
- Refrain from using excessive or negative labels. (Example: AIDS victim, brain-damaged)
- Do not use derogatory terms. (Example: crippled, invalid, etc.)

Instead, writers should adopt a people-first language approach or the first-person noun itself.

Avoiding Historical and Interpretive Inaccuracies

Basic writers should be cautious when accurately representing historical ideas. Changes in nouns and pronouns other than preferred by the person may cause serious misrepresentation of the subjects. Student writers should also be mindful of misinterpreting others' beliefs, preferences, and intentions. To avoid this issue, these writers can use the original language of the author within quotations and subsequently provide their commentary.

Avoiding Both Euphemisms and Crude Expressions

To maintain a balance between avoiding both euphemisms and crude expressions, student writers can keep themselves away from being overly polite, as it may convey a lack of confidence, and they should also avoid being impolite, which can result in the audience's antipathy towards the writers themselves. Through this strategy, they start learning to maintain objectivity in their writing.

Using Strong Verbs for Signaling

Student writers in the university setting engage in intellectual conversation by referencing related texts within their area of study. The use of proper signal phrases is essential for establishing a meaningful connection between what the sources convey and what these writers argue. For example, if a source author narrates a point, student writers should employ signal phrases like 'the author narrates it as….', or 'the author evaluates it as….' when the source is providing an evaluation.

In students' writings, a common issue I have encountered is their fascination towards empty verbs and vague expressions such as 'A says…' or 'X writes…' The overuse of these empty verbs such as 'says' and 'writes' weakens the precision of

writing. To address this concern, they can take support from the following comprehensive list of active and acute verbs:

accept	acknowledge	admit	adopt	advise	advocate
agree	allude	argue	arrive at	assert	assume
build	capture	caution	challenge	clarify	comment
compare	conclude	confirm	consider	contemplate	contend
convey	debate	declare	defend	demonstrate	denounce
deny	derive	determine	develop	digress	disagree
disclose	discover	discuss	dismiss	dissect	dissent
distinguish	distort	drag	echo	efface	elaborate
elucidate	emphasize	employ	enable	endorse	engage
enthrall	enunciate	equate	establish	evaluate	evoke
exaggerate	explain	explore	express	fail	favor
find	forge	form	formulate	fulfil	gather
generate	glorify	grapple	grasp	guess	handle
hesitate	highlight	hinder	hold	identify	ignore
illuminate	illustrate	imagine	imply	impose	impregnate
improve	incite	indicate	infer	include	inculcate
inform	inhibit	inquire	inspect	insinuate	intend
inspire	integrate	introduce	investigate	invite	involve
justify	juxtapose	lacerate	lament	laud	lead
link	locate	magnify	maintain	maltreat	manifest
marvel	measure	merge	misfire	misinterpret	mislead
mitigate	moan	motivate	muddle	muster	nag
narrate	negate	negotiate	nullify	obfuscate	obliterate
obscure	observe	obstruct	obtain	occupy	offend
offer	oppose	oppress	opt	oscillate	overcome

overlook	paraphrase	penetrate	perpetuate	perform	permeate
persevere	personify	persuade	pervade	ponder	portray
praise	precipitate	predict	prefer	preserve	present
presume	pretend	probe	proclaim	proliferate	promote
propose	provoke	postulate	qualify	question	quote
raise	ramble	rationalize	realize	reassure	recant
reciprocate	recognize	recommend	reconcile	reconstruct	recreate
reduce	refer	reflect	reform	refrain	refuse
regard	regret	reinforce	reiterate	reject	remark
remind	remove	repent	reply	report	represent
repudiate	resemble	resolve	respond	reveal	review
satirize	separate	settle	shift	show	signal
serve	signify	solve	strengthen	stimulate	stress
substantiate	subvert	suggest	summarize	support	symbolize
synthesize	theorize	transform	transgress	transmit	treat
undercut	undergo	undermine	underrate	unearth	urge
venture	view	violate	withdraw	wonder	yearn

However, this list is neither complete nor intended to limit the wider possibilities of writers' choices. These are only some possibilities out of many others that the student writers can explore through.

5. Findings and Conclusion

In this paper, the discussion revolves around the necessity of redefining the concept of errors in the teaching of writing pedagogy at TU. It is noted that many student writers struggle to articulate their voices due to their limited proficiency in academic language. The development of academic writing competence demands specialized training, orientation, and mentorship, as proficiency in casual conversation and everyday life does not ensure success in academic settings because they adhere to specific conventions and standards.

As highlighted by Shaughnessy, Bartholomae, and Williams, even writers whose first language is English encounter language struggles, let alone students from non-English backgrounds such as TU. Consequently, it is common for these students to have various mechanical issues ranging from word choices to grammatical and sentence structures in their writing. Recognizing this reality, instructors must provide support and care for these writers to bring diverse and richly informed experiences to their classrooms without language constraints. It is considered social injustice to label these students as deficient solely due to language barriers.

To address these challenges, it is imperative for writing instructors to assist students in articulating their voices by helping them adopt the acceptable language used in their respective discourse communities. Supporting this, Purna Chandra Bhusal in his "(Re)Sourcing Critical Counterstories in the Composition Classroom" argues that "[t]he purpose of (teaching) writing is to help students pour those inner voices onto the page." This pedagogical approach aims to empower student writers, enabling them to take agency in their academic endeavors. Arguing in this context, Hem Lal Pandey contends that addressing such challenges requires institutional intervention. He proposes that strong support to the basic writers in their writing can be achieved through the establishment of writing center at TU. The primary goal of such center would be "to foster and elevate the writing skills and capabilities of student writers across all disciplines at TU" (p 11). In whatever measure, proper facilitating roles of the instructors become crucial in dealing with errors while teaching academic writing at the university.

Ultimately, the strategies and guidelines outlined in this paper, which are not prescriptive rules, can function and also serve as empowering tools for writing teachers to facilitate the successful transition of basic writers into academic writing. Discerning common errors, challenges, and struggles through these approaches allows teachers to offer targeted support and these student writers toward mastering academic conventions. While this paper presents possibilities, not definitive solutions, it emphasizes the crucial role of teachers in fostering successful writing experiences of graduate students in the university writing communities. As we continue to pursue inclusive and supportive writing environments, ongoing research and collaboration about the struggles of student writers will be instrumental in identifying and addressing the diverse types of needs of basic writers who consistently navigate the demands of academic writing in university classrooms.

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