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Needs Analysis for Enhancing Academic English Writing Instruction among Chinese EFL University Instructors

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Abstract. Academic English writing (AEW) is a crucial language skill that enables university students to participate in scholarly dialogue and is strongly linked to their overall academic achievement. However, university instructors face considerable challenges in implementing this teaching task, underscoring the necessity for more effective instructional approaches. Advancements in science and technology have profoundly transformed pedagogical methods and instructional practices. There is an urgent need to reconsider existing pedagogical approaches and integrate ICT tools to meet the demands of contemporary educational paradigms. This study investigates the need for developing a pedagogical module tailored for Chinese AEW university instructors using a quantitative method. The needs analysis was conducted through a questionnaire adapted from Romanowski (2017), and the data was collected from 60 instructors through simple random sampling. The survey questionnaire was analyzed through descriptive analysis using percentage score and frequency. The study investigated the instructors' perspectives according to Target Situation Analysis (TSA), Present Situation Analysis (PSA), Learning Needs Analysis (LNA), and Means Situation Analysis (MSA). The findings underscore the significance for course designers, AEW instructors, and higher education institutions. Furthermore, the study addresses the growing demand for ICT tools in AEW instruction and highlights the potential of ICT tools to help instructors enhance their AEW classes.

Keywords: Academic English writing; EFL instructors; ICT tools; Chinese higher education; needs analysis

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1. Introduction

Among the numerous languages, English has become a globally dominant language, serving as a key medium in international discourse and facilitating communication among individuals from varied linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Pennycook, 2017). It is regarded as the first global lingua franca, and it is the most extensively used language worldwide across various fields, including diplomacy, mass media, international trade, telecommunications, and the publishing of newspapers and other books (Rao, 2019).

English has long served as the primary language of knowledge dissemination within higher education institutions (Abd Rahman et al., 2024). It has emerged as the principal language for content delivery for higher education across the globe (Richards & Pun, 2023). In China, numerous universities, particularly those at the top tier, have benefited from substantial policy support for English-medium instruction (EMI) (Hu & Li, 2017). EMI has been officially recognized and promoted through national-level higher education policies as a strategic measure to support the internationalization of China's tertiary education system (Liao et al., 2025).

In China, many universities have designated the AEW as a compulsory course which helps students complete their research papers and theses, as well as assisting them in becoming more competitive in the job market, especially for junior and senior students who are mainly required to understand the academic genres, language and style, as well as critical thinking and analysis. However, significant challenges remain in instruction, particularly in addressing learners' cognitive and expressive difficulties in relation to academic writing.

Research indicates that these students often lack essential skills, including evaluating and citing source materials, synthesizing theories and scientific literature (Walter & Stouck, 2020). AEW requires students to engage in the deep processing of information (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2023) in order to produce reasoning and generate new ideas critically and clearly (Ondrusek, 2012). Currently, students in academic writing classes present as having more of a passive role due to receiving knowledge, mechanical drills, and poor peer and instructor interactions (Li et al., 2024; Woodworth, 2023). Another problem is that most AEW classes in Chinese universities focus on imparting knowledge, while students have limited time to practice after acquiring said knowledge (Li & Ma, 2018).

Although these studies highlight the practical challenges in current AEW instruction, a clear research gap remains in understanding how to effectively connect policy-driven expectations and actual classroom practices that engage learners actively and improve AEW skills. Specifically, existing AEW pedagogical practices often lack a comprehensive integration of process-based learning, peer and instructor interaction, and the effective use of ICT tools to support autonomous learning. Moreover, previous research has focused predominantly on student perspectives, with insufficient emphasis on the instructional needs of university instructors who are critical agents in

implementing pedagogical innovations.

From a theoretical standpoint, the existing literature has yet to establish a comprehensive pedagogical framework that effectively integrates process-based learning and active interaction within instructional design, particularly in the context of AEW instruction in EFL settings (Wahdan & Buragohain, 2019). Methodologically, few studies have employed structured needs analysis models to examine the instructional needs of university instructors; most of the existing research tends to prioritize student perspectives (Erdoğan & Gürol, 2021). For conceptual shortcomings, a disconnect remains between the intended goals of AEW instruction and the practical application of empirically supported strategies, including ICT integration and task-based repetition (Celeste & Osias, 2024; Khezrlou, 2022).

The rapid advancement of information technology highlights the need for instructors to adapt quickly by integrating information and communication technology (ICT) tools into AEW instruction to address instructional challenges. In a study conducted by Karunakaran and Jebakumar (2023), which emphasizes the use of ICT tools in teaching ESL writing skills, the findings showed that ICT tools can significantly improve the students' writing skills by providing interactive and engaging learning experiences.

In addition, nee et al. (2019) investigated the role of ICT and social media in promoting writing skills among Chinese pupils. The findings indicate that ICT is an effective and practical tool for enhancing the pupils' writing skills, especially in learning English as a second language. Although there is growing recognition of the importance of ICT tools in education, there is a significant lack of research exploring how university instructors perceive their instructional needs and integrate these ICT tools effectively within AEW pedagogy, particularly in the Chinese EFL context.

The identified challenges in Chinese AEW instruction necessitate a structured pedagogical framework. This study integrates four core dimensions of Dudley-Evans and St John's (1998) Needs Analysis Model, investigate target needs, current status needs, strategy needs, and means needs to establish a contextually responsive instructional framework. This study seeks to fill a significant gap in the existing literature by exploring the need for developing an AEW teaching module, with particular attention paid to the perspectives of instructors from 43 universities in Hebei province, the northern part of China. By delving into Chinese university instructors' instructional needs and their perceptions of integrating ICT tools into AEW instruction, this study seeks to elucidate the potential benefits and challenges of implementing innovative teaching approaches.

The importance of this study stems from its potential to contribute to both the theoretical and practical dimensions of language education. Theoretically, it enriches the growing body of literature on technology integration in pedagogy, with particular emphasis on its application in AEW instruction. By centering on

academic writing, this study offers valuable insights into the effective use of ICT tools to support instructors in enhancing student writing proficiency, thereby addressing the evolving needs of contemporary AEW instruction.

This study investigates the four primary research questions developed in accordance with the Dudley-Evans and St John's Needs Analysis Model (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998):

1. What are the necessities, lacks, and wants perceived by Chinese university instructors regarding AEW instruction?
2. What is the current AEW instruction conducted by Chinese university instructors?
3. What teaching strategies do instructors believe are needed to enhance AEW instruction?
4. What are the perceptions of Chinese university instructors on integrating ICT into AEW instruction?

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Importance of Academic English Writing

Academic writing is widely recognized as a fundamental skill essential for achieving success in higher education (Jiang et al., 2022). AEW falls under English for Academic Purposes (EAP), which refers to the language skills required for academic study in formal education settings (Jordan, 1997). As a key branch of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), EAP focuses on the linguistic and communicative competencies needed for success in English-medium higher education (Gillett, 1996).

AEW is characterized by specific features such as a formal register, clear structure and organization, evidence-based reasoning, critical thinking, and adherence to academic genres (Bhandari & Bhandari, 2025; Khairuddin et al., 2024; Phichiensathien, 2016). Formality in academic writing is featured by the use of discipline-specific vocabulary, hedging and boosting expressions, and complex grammatical structures that enhance precision, clarity, and authority (Larsson et al., 2023). Logical organization and coherence are also fundamental, and a high-quality academic text depends on the effective integration of cohesive devices and coherence elements to make it comprehensible (Abata Checa, 2021).

In addition, AEW requires arguments to be supported by credible evidence from scholarly sources, typically peer-reviewed research (Fowler, 2022). Critical thinking is especially common in EAP, where it is generally treated as a collection of discrete skills like analysis, evaluation, and synthesis (Gimenez et al., 2025). AEW is also genre-based, encompassing forms such as essays, theses, and research articles, which emphasizes the analysis of rhetorical structures and linguistic features specific to each genre (Liu et al., 2024).

In addition to serving as a means of assessment, both summative and formative, AEW plays a central role in knowledge construction and dissemination within academic communities (Kettle & Ryan, 2018). With a growing emphasis on

formative assessment, instructors are increasingly supporting students through scaffolded writing tasks and detailed feedback (Fowler, 2022).

2.2 Needs Analysis of Academic English Writing

Needs analysis (NA) is a critical foundation for course development or reform, offering insight into the learners' existing knowledge and the skills they need to acquire (Ratnawati et al., 2018). According to Long (2005) and Macalister & Nation (2019), NA typically involves three components: necessities (what students are required to learn), lacks (gaps in their current abilities), and wants (their personal learning preferences regarding their learning objectives). The analysis phase shows that the instructional designers assess the current situation, examine the training environment, comprehend the objective of this learning algorithm, and ascertain what has and hasn't worked to fill in past knowledge gaps (Vijayakumar et al., 2023).

There are numerous NA models that have been adopted in research (i.e. the Mckillip (1978) model, Target Situational Analysis Model (TSA) (Hutchinson & Waters, 1981), Meaning Analysis Model (MA) (West, 1994), Present Situational Analysis Model (PSA) (Jordan, 1997) and the Dudley-Evans and St. John model (1998)). In this study, the researcher adopted the Dudley-Evans and St. John model (1998) to conduct the needs analysis of the Chinese university instructors, which offers a comprehensive framework by integrating earlier models to address both the practical and pedagogical aspects of language needs, particularly within ESP contexts (Tarmizi & Janan, 2022).

Prior research has identified the common challenges faced by EFL learners in academic writing, such as difficulties with idea generation, organization, drafting, vocabulary use, and grammar (Jančaříková et al., 2020; Rofii et al., 2019). These problems are often compounded by insufficiently guided instruction, underscoring the need for process-based and context-specific approaches. While numerous studies have analyzed students' needs in EAP, there remains a notable gap in research specifically addressing the academic writing needs of EFL instructors. Consequently, this study seeks to investigate the instructional needs of Chinese instructors in AEW fields to support more effective and targeted module development.

2.3 Teaching Approaches and Academic English Writing

A variety of instructional approaches have been applied in AEW courses. One notable model is the Reading-Writing Instructional Model (RWIM), which integrates online resources to combine content knowledge with writing skill development. This model has been shown to enhance students' academic reading and writing abilities (Wang et al., 2018). Lei and Xu (2018) conducted an 8-week AEW training course using the Task Repetition (TR) method, grounded in Dynamic Systems Theory, to explore its impact on writing improvement. Marsiti et al. (2023) indicated that project-based blended learning significantly improves university students' creativity, problem-solving, and achievement in academic tasks, especially their writing and research skills. Despite these innovations, challenges remain—particularly regarding the limited peer

interaction in AEW classes (Bi, 2022).

However, in an actual teaching environment at Chinese universities and colleges, despite the fact that the teacher-centered approach has been extensively criticized, it continues to be the dominant instructional method (He, 2021). This fosters reliance on the teacher, passive reactions and rote learning instead of encouraging students to be independent, autonomous learners who actively explore the content and engage (Cheng & Chen, 2022).

With the development of technology, BL has swiftly emerged in China. Lv and Wang (2016) researched a university English FCM utilizing the SPOC+ digital teaching resources platform. The findings indicate that such approaches can enhance English proficiency, reduce repetitive teaching tasks, and foster innovation in instruction. BL thus presents a promising solution to bridge the gap between traditional practices and the need for more interactive, student-centered AEW instruction.

2.4 Technology Integration and Academic English Writing

With rapid technological advancements, the integration of ICT tools has become increasingly important in education, particularly in EAP. The recent literature highlights the diverse applications of technology in academic writing instruction, including academic writing assessments, online collaborative platforms, automated feedback systems, and corpus-based tools. Digital writing platforms help students significantly improve their writing performance (Pitukwong & Saraiwang, 2024).

He (2019), for instance, used the Peerceptiv online peer assessment system in conjunction with personalized teacher tutoring, showing that students could critically assess their peers' work, enhance their understanding of academic discourse, and improve their problem-solving skills. Guo and Li (2023) investigated the application of a multimodal teaching model in English writing courses, which significantly improved the students' writing scores, lexical complexity, accuracy, and fluency, and increased the students' motivation toward writing.

Although the existing literature underscores the importance of AEW and explores a variety of instructional approaches, there remains a notable lack of empirical research that systematically investigates the specific needs of Chinese EFL university instructors in enhancing AEW instruction. While studies have documented technological integration and pedagogical innovations (e.g. Hamzah et al., 2024; Hosseini & Kinnunen, 2021; Li et al., 2023), AEW teaching in China is still largely characterized by teacher-centered approaches, limited interactions, and insufficient support for fostering learner autonomy.

Few studies have addressed how instructors perceive and engage with innovative methods like flipped classrooms (Kong et al., 2024; Wang & Zhou, 2022) and task repetition (Liu, 2023) in Chinese higher education. This gap points to the need for a focused needs analysis that captures the instructional

challenges, preferences for teaching approaches, the instructors' perceptions towards integrating ICT in instruction, and the support required for effective AEW instruction.

3. Method

This study employed a quantitative research design, which facilitates the collection of standardized data from a relatively large sample, enabling objective comparisons across the variables and enhancing the generalizability of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It is particularly appropriate for needs analysis, as it allows for the quantifying of the prevalence and prioritization of specific instructional requirements, providing empirical evidence to inform data-driven curriculum development. Specifically, a cross-sectional survey design was utilized, employing a structured questionnaire to collect self-reported data from the participants, which is effective at capturing the instructors' perceptions and needs at a single point in time.

3.1 Research Instrument

The research was conducted using a quantitative design to investigate the needs of university instructors in developing a module to teach AEW combined with a flipped classroom and task repetition. The instructors' responses were collected using needs analysis questionnaires (see Appendix). In terms of the needs analysis questionnaire, the survey questions were formed based on the Dudley-Evans and St John's Needs Analysis Model (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). This model covers four types of needs analysis, namely Target Situation Analysis (TSA), Present Situation Analysis (PSA), Learning Situation Analysis (LSA) and Means Situation Analysis (MSA). This questionnaire was adapted from the comprehensive framework developed by Romanowski (2017), which integrates the four key dimensions originally proposed by Dudley-Evans and St John (1998).

To suit the specific context of AEW instruction in Chinese universities, the original open-ended and theoretical items were transformed into multiple-choice questions with structured options, allowing for quantitative analysis. For example, under Target Situation Analysis (TSA), Romanowski's general question "Why is the language needed?" was adapted into context-specific items such as "What are the most important academic English writing skills you think you should teach?". These modifications ensured contextual relevance and practical applicability for data collection among AEW instructors, while still preserving the core diagnostic intent of Romanowski's original needs analysis framework.

The content validity and face validity of the questionnaire were established through consultation with a panel of 5 experts in the field of EFL research, academic writing, and instructional design. The experts reviewed the questionnaire to ensure that the items were relevant, clearly worded, and aligned with the objectives of the study. According to Long (2005), although reliability is important in the development of measurement scales, it is not always critical in needs analysis when the primary objective is to collect

information about the target population to inform instructional design. Therefore, a reliability test was not conducted in this study, as the primary objective was to gather descriptive information about the target population.

3.2 Participants

The participants in this study consisted of 60 university instructors from 43 public universities in Hebei Province, China. The population of this study was chosen as the 43 universities have launched AEW programs, consisting of 432 instructors. Regarding the participants involved in the questionnaire, simple random sampling was employed, whereby every member of the population had the same probability of being selected, and any bias present in the population can be dispersed equally throughout the selected units (Thomas et al., 2023). Samples of 30 or above are appropriate for research studies using statistical analysis, according to (Cohen et al., 2017). Thus, the 60 university AEW instructors in Hebei province were selected randomly in the needs analysis phase using the random number function of Microsoft Excel from the 432 total university instructors.

3.3 Research Procedures

Initially, the needs analysis questionnaire was constructed and then sent to the heads of departments to obtain administrative approval and to facilitate the distribution of the questionnaire among eligible AEW instructors. Once approval was granted, a copy of the questionnaire was shared with them. Subsequently, an online link to the questionnaire, hosted on WJX (China's leading survey platform), was shared with the target instructors who had agreed to participate. The participants were informed that the completed questionnaires would be collected after one week. For data analysis, descriptive statistics were employed, using SPSS version 26 to analyze the responses. The analysis focused on percentage scores and frequencies.

4. Results

The results of the needs analysis questionnaire are organized into four main sections: (1) the perceived necessities, lacks, and wants in AEW instruction; (2) the current AEW Instruction conducted by Chinese instructors; (3) the teaching strategies supported by AEW instructors; and (4) the perceptions of ICT integration into AEW instruction. Prior to these sections, a profile of the participating instructors is presented.

4.1 Respondent's Profile

The participants in the needs analysis were 60 university instructors, selected based on records from the Academic Affairs Office confirming their qualifications to teach AEW at the tertiary level. Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents. Among the 60 selected participants, over half were female (58.3%). The two largest age groups were 25 to 30 years (40.0%) and 41 years or older (31.7%). In terms of academic rank, most participants were lecturers (43.3%), followed by associate professors (25.0%). Regarding professional experience, 35.0% of participants had between 1 and 3 years of teaching experience, while 31.7% had over 6 years. A smaller proportion

(10.0%) reported having 4 to 6 years of experience. Regarding teaching competence, 61.7% of instructors indicated that they were proficient in delivering AEW instruction. Furthermore, 65.0% of respondents reported that students in their courses were able to develop substantial academic writing skills.

The inclusion of the participants' demographic profiles is crucial for providing essential context to interpret their perceived needs. Variables such as gender, age, teaching experience, academic rank, and proficiency of AEW instruction are likely to influence the instructors' responses to issues related to AEW instruction. A thorough understanding of these factors is fundamental for designing a contextually relevant AEW module that aligns with the study's research questions and effectively addresses the specific needs of the instructor population.

Table 1: Instructors' profile

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	25	41.7
	Female	35	58.3
Age	25-30 years old	24	40.0
	31-35years old	8	13.3
	36-40 years old	9	15.0
	Age 41 and above	19	31.7
	Lecturer	26	43.3
Current position	Assistant Professor	6	10.0
	Associate Professor	15	25.0
	Professor	8	13.3
	Other: student; doctor	5	8.3
The years of teaching AEW	Less than 1 year	14	23.3%
	1-3 year	21	35.0%
	4-6 years	6	10.0%
	More than 6 years	19	31.7%
	Yes	37	61.7%
Proficiently teaching AEW	No	23	38.3%
	Yes	39	65.0%
Students gain great writing skills	No	21	35.0%
	Yes	39	65.0%

4.2 Perceived Necessities, Lacks, and Wants in AEW Instruction

Table 2 presents the findings of the Target Situation Analysis (TSA), which are categorized into three components: (1) necessities, (2) lacks, and (3) wants. In terms of essential AEW skills to be taught (necessities), the findings reveal that instructors place the highest priority on teaching higher-order writing skills in AEW, with particular emphasis on essay structuring (78.3%) and the development of critical arguments (76.7%).

These skills were favored over more surface-level concerns such as grammar accuracy. While a substantial number of instructors also highlighted the importance of formal academic style and citation practices, notably fewer considered grammatical correctness. This trend indicates a pedagogical shift toward promoting higher-order writing skills and academic genre, rather than focusing exclusively on linguistic accuracy.

The primary weaknesses in teaching AEW (lacks) are outlined in the second section of the TSA. The findings reveal that instructors perceive appropriate academic vocabulary (68.3%), idea organization, and thesis statements (56.7%) as the most pressing challenges in the students' academic writing. While problems such as citation accuracy (43.3%) and language editing (33.3%) were also noted, they were regarded as comparatively less critical. The use of statistics in writing was rarely identified as a major concern.

The primary objectives (wants) for improving the students' AEW proficiency reveal a strong emphasis on improving essay clarity and coherence, which was the foremost goal among instructors (81.7%). Closely related was the focus on cultivating critical thinking and analytical skills (70.0%), reflecting the importance placed on higher-order cognitive abilities. Additionally, instructors valued fostering a formal academic style (65.0%) and enhancing source integration skills (51.7%). Building the students' confidence in their writing (38.3%), while less frequently mentioned, also represented a meaningful instructional goal.

Table 2: Findings of the Target Situation Analysis (TSA)

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Important AEW skills to teach? (Necessities)	Structuring essays and papers	47	78.3%
	Developing arguments and critical analysis	46	76.7%
	Citing sources and avoiding plagiarism	30	50.0%
	Formal academic style and tone	37	61.7%
	Other: Don't make verbal or grammatical mistakes	3	5.0%
	Organizing ideas and structuring paragraphs	34	56.7%
Main weakness in teaching AEW (Lacks)	Developing and supporting thesis statements	34	56.7%
	Using appropriate academic vocabulary and phrases	41	68.3%
	Citing sources correctly in-text and in references	26	43.3%
	Editing for grammar, spelling and punctuation errors	20	33.3%
	Other: statistics	1	1.7%
Main goal to improve the students' writing (Wants)	Write clearer, more coherent essays and papers	49	81.7%
	Develop stronger critical thinking and analysis skills	42	70.0%

Improve ability to summarize and paraphrase sources	31	51.7%
Learn to write in a more formal, academic style	39	65.0%
Gain confidence in their academic writing abilities	23	38.3%
Other	0	0.0%

The findings from the TSA revealed that respondents prioritized sub-skills such as essay and paper structure, argument development, and critical analysis as the core components of AEW instruction. A key challenge identified was the students' difficulty when using appropriate academic vocabulary and expressions. The primary instructional objective was to support students in producing clearer and more coherent academic essays with critical thinking.

4.3 Challenges Faced by Instructors in Current AEW Instruction

The second part of the needs analysis questionnaire focused on the Present Situation Analysis (PSA), which highlighted the challenges instructors encounter in AEW instruction. Regarding the students' AEW proficiency, as illustrated in Figure 1, the majority of instructors (63%) reported that their students were at a beginning level of writing proficiency. In comparison, 32% assessed their students as having intermediate-level skills, while only 5% perceived their students as possessing advanced AEW proficiency. This distribution highlights the prevailing challenge of low AEW proficiency among students in the current instructional context.

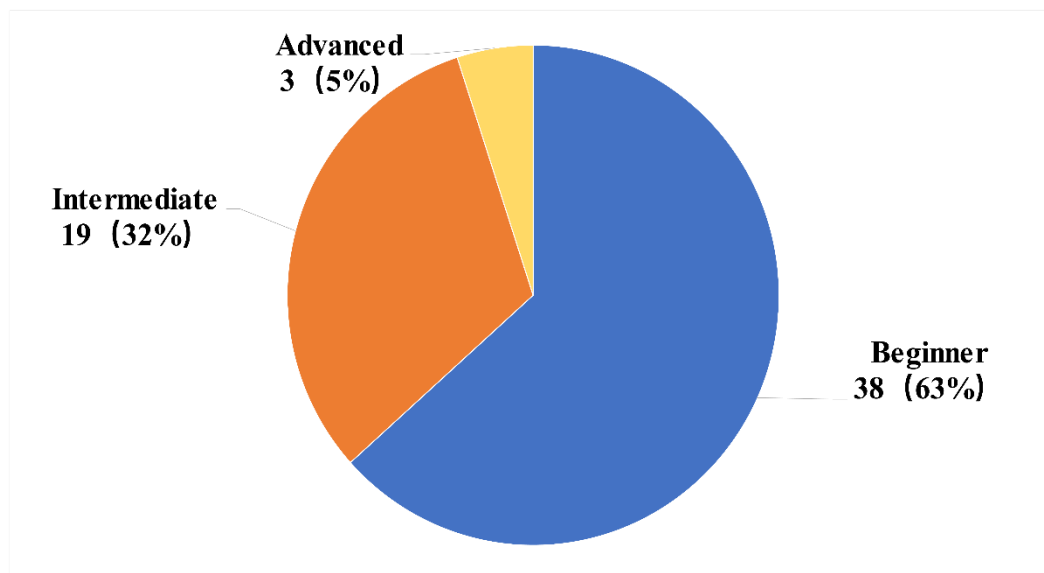


Figure 1: Students' AEW proficiency as regarded by instructors

Figure 2 illustrates that the most pressing challenges for AEW instructors relate to limited practice time and insufficient exposure to essay structure and organization (60.0%). Meanwhile, a notable proportion of instructors reported minimal interaction with students and insufficient use of online teaching resources (40.0%). Reliance on textbooks remains prevalent, potentially

restricting instructional diversity (51.7%). Challenges in student engagement were also frequently cited (45.0%), while the integration of statistical data in instruction was rarely emphasized (1.7%).

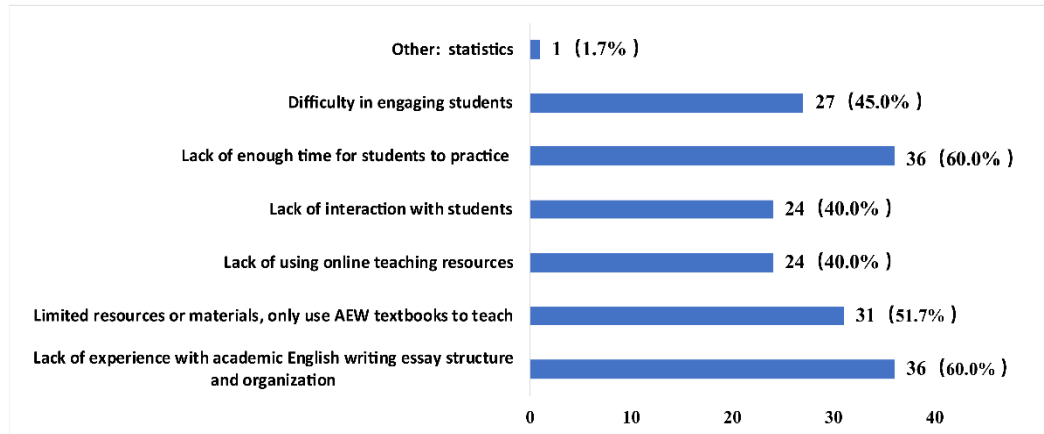


Figure 2: Challenges faced by AEW instructors

Figure 3 highlights a clear preference among AEW instructors for student-centered teaching methods. Task repetition (60.0%) and product-oriented approaches (58.3%) were the most widely endorsed, with each supported by over half of the respondents. Project-based and problem-based learning also featured prominently, reflecting a shift towards experiential and inquiry-based pedagogies. Cooperative and process-oriented teaching methods were moderately adopted, while more traditional approaches such as lecture-style (36.7%) and genre-based teaching (30.0%) being less commonly employed. Situational teaching was the least favored method among the instructors surveyed.

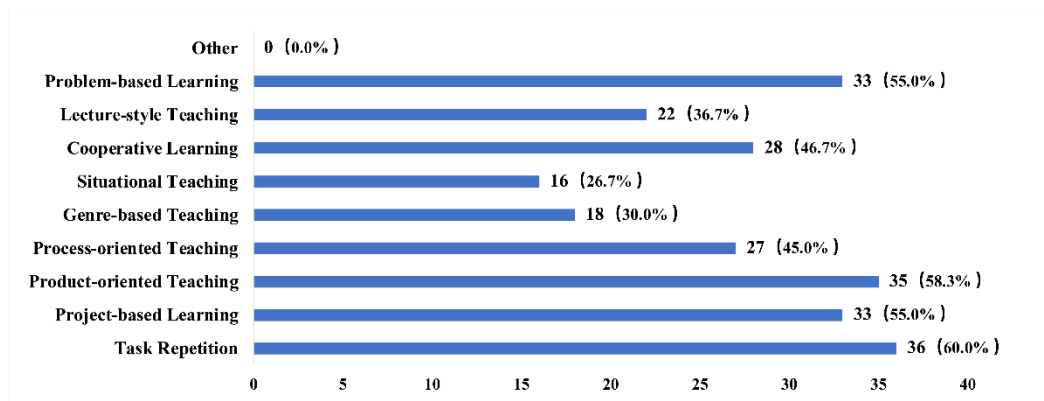


Figure 3: Teaching method adopted by AEW instructors

This section of the questionnaire examined the teaching materials preferred by AEW instructors. As shown in Figure 4, electronic resources emerged as the most popular choice (80.0%), with the majority of respondents supporting their use. Printed books remained a close second, indicating that traditional materials still hold significant value. In contrast, less than half of the instructors reported regularly using electronic libraries (48.3%), supplementary handouts (46.7%), or

academic research articles (41.7%), suggesting that these materials are less integrated into current instructional practices.

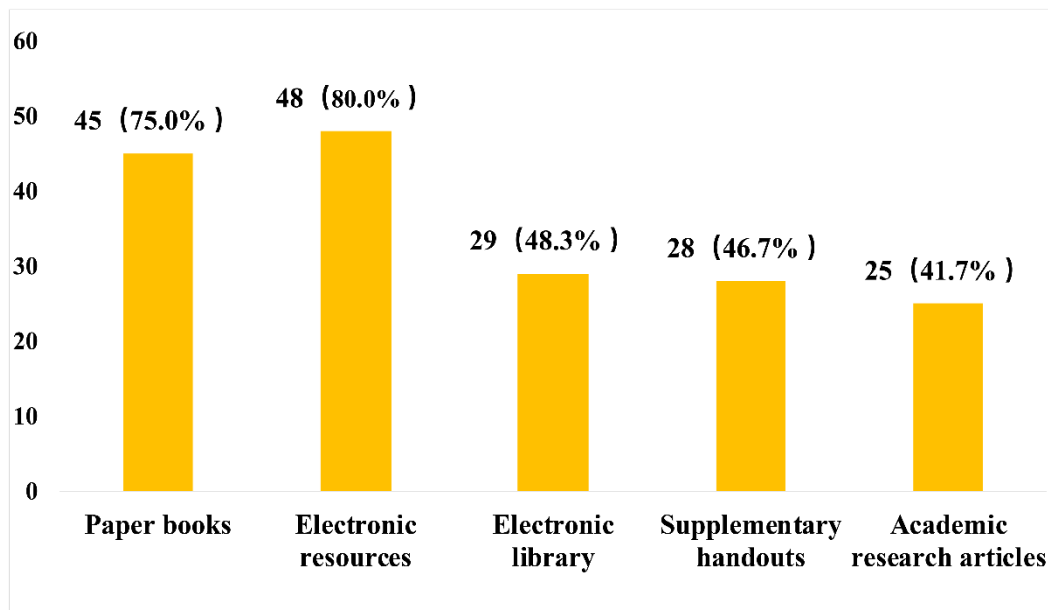


Figure 4: AEW teaching material used by instructors

4.4 Teaching Strategies Supported by AEW Instructors

The third part of the questionnaire, the Learning Needs Analysis (LNA), focused on two main topics: teaching activities conducive to instructors (see Figure 5) and the teaching approaches preferred by AEW instructors (see Figure 6). As shown in Figure 5, the majority (85.0%) emphasized analyzing model essays and papers as a core activity. This was complemented by increased opportunities for practice (53.3%) and group discussions (51.7%). Other notable activities included targeted mini lessons on academic vocabulary and grammar (48.3%) and instruction on citation styles and plagiarism prevention (38.3%).

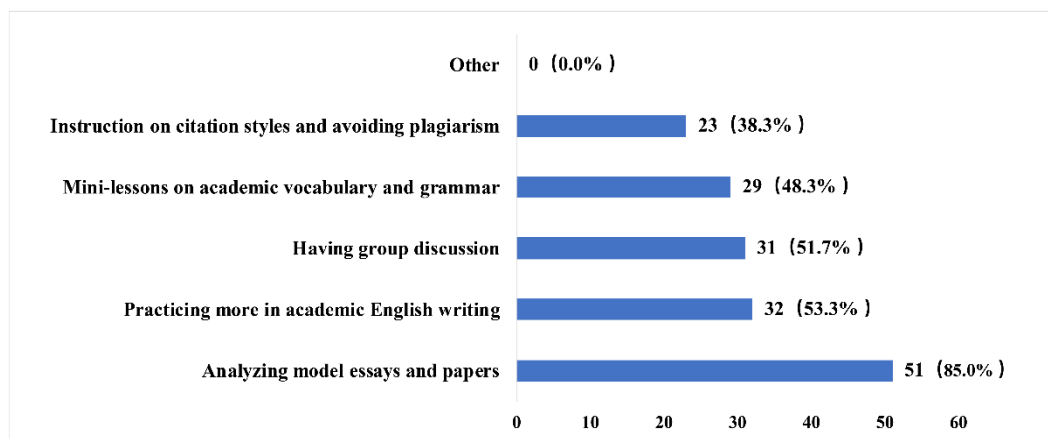


Figure 5: Activities conducive to the instructors' teaching goals

Figure 6 depicts the preferred teaching approaches among AEW instructors. The majority favored the Blended Learning Approach (86.7%), followed closely by Communicative Language Teaching and the Process-Oriented Approach, each supported by 80.0% of respondents. Task-Based and Participatory Approaches also received considerable support, with approximately two-thirds and 60% of instructors favoring them, respectively. In contrast, more traditional methods such as the Lecture-Based, Product-Oriented, and Grammar-Translation Approaches were less popular, with support ranging from 35.0% to 50.0%.

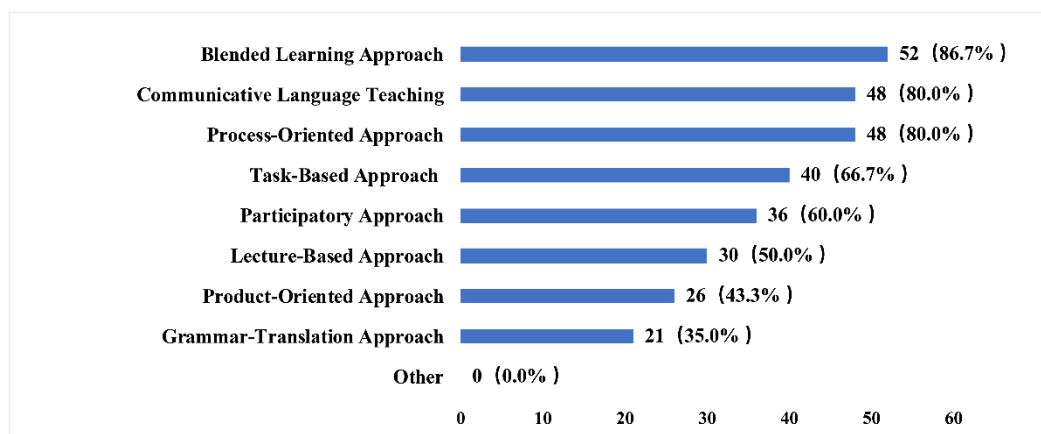


Figure 6: Teaching approach preferred by AEW instructors

4.5 Perceptions of ICT Integration into AEW Instruction

The final part of the needs analysis questionnaire is the Mean Situation Analysis (MSA). Table 3 indicates that nearly all instructors (88.3%) had internet access to support AEW teaching. Cell phones (80.0%) and desktop computers (73.3%) were the predominant tools used in classes, with laptops (56.7%) also being widely employed, although to a lesser extent. Regarding social media platforms, instructors primarily utilized domestically developed resources such as Chinese university MOOCs (65.0%), WeChat official accounts (60.0%), and Bilibili (51.7%), reflecting a preference for culturally familiar platforms. Other platforms like Chinese Quora (31.7%) and Microblog (20.0%) were less commonly used, while only a small minority (13.3%) engaged with TikTok and AIU Campus.

Table 3: Internet access and devices used in AEW classes

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Devices used in class	Cell phone	48	80.0%
	Tablet	14	23.3%
	Laptop	34	56.7%
	Desktop computer	44	73.3%
	Other	0	0.0%
Have internet access in class	Yes	53	88.3%
	No	7	11.7%
Social media use	Chinese university MOOCs	39	65.0%
	Bilibili website	31	51.7%
	Microblog	12	20.0%

Chinese Quora	19	31.7%
WeChat official account	36	60.0%
Other: Tiktok; AIU Campus; Don't use social media;	8	13.3%

5. Discussion

The findings of this study shed light on several key aspects related to developing an effective AEW module tailored to the needs of Chinese university instructors. These results are discussed according to the following aspects: (1) perceived needs, gaps, and goals in AEW instruction, (2) the current status of China's AEW instruction, (3) the Chinese instructors' teaching preferences, and (4) viewpoints on using ICT in teaching AEW.

5.1 Perceived Needs, Gaps, and Goals in AEW Instruction

The findings from the TSA offer a clear picture of the instructors' perceptions regarding the essential AEW skills that students require, as well as the current teaching deficiencies, and desired outcomes. The importance of structuring essays and developing critical arguments was emphasized, which reflects a continued highlighting of coherence, cohesion, and logical reasoning in academic writing instruction. Hyland (2019) indicated that effective academic writing hinges on the students' ability to structure their work clearly, and present arguments in a logical and critical manner.

Additionally, instructors identified the need to teach formal academic style and tone, a key component of academic literacy. As Hyland (2019) notes, mastering academic tone is closely tied to genre awareness and disciplinary identity. Students must learn both what to write and how to write within the discipline's conventions.

The second part of the TSA, which highlights the weaknesses in AEW instruction, reflects the challenges commonly encountered in AEW courses in China. Notably, Chinese students often struggle with academic vocabulary, including appropriate word choices and collocations, hindered their ability to produce effective academic texts (Min & Sukying, 2024). In addition, the students' writing lacks supporting thesis statements. Fang et al. (2020) found that over 50% of student essays lacked rhetorical coherence between the supporting details and thesis statement, while 34.1% showed a discursive relationship between thesis claims and the body paragraph content. Additionally, many students face difficulties with idea generation, organization, lexical choice, and grammatical accuracy within EAP settings (Yu & Yan, 2024).

The instructors' "want" indicates their desire to organize an innovative AEW teaching module that can foster their students' critical thinking skills, improve their literacy to write clear, coherent essays in a logical way, and strengthen their formal academic style. This aligns with the prior research that emphasizes the importance of teaching organizational strategies and critical thinking as core components of academic writing development, particularly for L2 learners (Hyland, 2019; Leki, 2017). Based on the necessities, lacks and wants from

instructors, the main teaching goal of AEW sub-skills is clearly presented.

5.2 Current Status of China's AEW Instruction

The PSA section highlights the key challenges and teaching practices in AEW classes at Chinese universities. A primary concern among instructors is the students' low proficiency in AEW, with most perceived to be at a beginner level (Jiang et al., 2022). This finding is consistent with the previous research indicating that most tertiary English courses highlight the language's common objectives but focus less on the academic writing aspect (Cai, 2017). This trend underscores the urgent need for curriculum designs that scaffold AEW tasks and support the development of academic literacy.

The challenges reported by instructors further illuminate the key problems in AEW instruction. The most prominent barriers include limited time for writing practice and inadequate exposure to academic essay structures. These constraints indicate that Chinese education limits opportunities for extended writing practice (You & Li, 2022) and that exam-oriented teaching reduces opportunities for critical thinking, creativity, and the holistic development of student competencies (Yasmin et al., 2023).

Limited interactions between instructors and students or among peers suggests that pedagogy remains largely teacher-centered, which is one of the dominant approaches in Chinese classrooms (Zhang, 2021). This approach fosters passive learning and rote memorization rather than encouraging independent thinking and peer engagement (Cheng & Chen, 2022).

In China, university instructors often rely on limited teaching resources, reflecting a lack of instructional variety. This further restricts the instructors' ability to diversify their teaching approaches (Paris, 2022). Although online teaching resources provide access to extensive high-quality materials that could greatly enhance instruction, many Chinese instructors lack the awareness and skills needed to effectively integrate these tools into their teaching.

Interestingly, while traditional teaching methods still persist, a notable proportion of instructors reported employing more innovative approaches such as task repetition, project-based learning, and problem-based learning. These findings suggest a growing awareness among instructors to adopt active and student-centered learning strategies (Huang & Kuang, 2024). The findings also reveal a significant preference for electronic resources over traditional print materials. This shift follows the trends in digital education and reflects the instructors' attempts to integrate technology into writing instruction.

5.3 Chinese Instructors' Teaching Preferences

AEW instructors emphasized the use of interactive, student-centered strategies grounded in academic writing practices. Consistent with the existing literature, they highlighted the value of model essay instruction where students engage with authentic academic texts to internalize structure, style, and discipline-specific conventions (Hyland, 2007). This reflects a broader pedagogical shift toward scaffolded, inquiry-based learning in academic writing instruction.

There was also a strong preference for active learning approaches, particularly collaborative activities such as group discussions. This supports the findings from Gibbons (2015), who found that peer interaction and task repetition promote deeper engagement with writing content and processes. Instructors viewed these activities as essential for fostering critical thinking and helping students refine their writing through social interaction and feedback. Such interactive environments are especially effective at developing metacognitive awareness and improving writing quality over time.

Technology-enhanced instruction also emerged as a prominent theme. Instructors expressed a preference for blended learning environments that combine traditional face-to-face teaching with computer-mediated instruction (Graham, 2006). This reflects a growing post-pandemic shift in higher education toward blended approaches, recognizing their potential to enrich teaching and learning experiences (Sia et al., 2023; Singh et al., 2021). The integration of face-to-face instruction with online platforms is increasingly viewed as a way to accommodate diverse learning styles and foster self-directed learning, both of which are essential for developing academic writing and other higher-order skills (Geng et al., 2019; Uz & Uzun, 2018).

5.4 Viewpoints on Using ICT in Teaching AEW

The instructors' responses in the MSA provide compelling evidence of the growing integration of ICT tools and digital platforms in AEW instruction. These findings reflect a broader trend in higher education that emphasizes digital readiness as essential for effective 21st-century teaching (Geng et al., 2019). The widespread use of digital devices such as smartphones, desktop computers, and laptops indicates high technological accessibility among instructors, supporting the feasibility of implementing mobile-assisted language learning strategies.

The adoption of various social media and online learning platforms, particularly Chinese university MOOCs, WeChat official accounts, and Bilibili, reflects a growing reliance on domestically developed educational technologies tailored to local university students. This aligns with Tarczynski et al. (2019), who found that students prefer using culturally familiar social media platforms for educational purposes.

The strong support for mobile learning and flipped learning underscores a shift toward learner-centered methods that leverage technology to extend learning beyond the physical classroom, which can improve student autonomy and help students engage in-class activities (Campillo-Ferrer & Miralles-Martínez, 2021), stimulating their academic motivation towards academic achievement (Wu, 2019), and increasing teacher-student interactions (Wei, 2021). As instructors show a readiness to incorporate ICT tools, there is a strong foundation for developing an innovative teaching module combining ICT tools.

6. Conclusion

This study aims to address an important gap in the current literature by exploring the needs for developing a AEW teaching module from the perspective of instructors in China. First of all, several significant implications arise for course designers, AEW instructors, and higher education institutions. For AEW course designers, integrating active, student-centered strategies, such as task repetition and the flipped classroom model, is essential. Instructors should emphasize key writing sub-skills, including essay structure, organization, critical argumentation, thesis development, and formal academic style. Instructional activities should provide scaffolded and repeated writing practice within BL environments.

The growing reliance on ICT tools further implies that institutions must support both instructors and students in leveraging digital platforms to enhance writing outcomes. In addition, the sample, drawn from 43 universities in Hebei province, may not represent the broader population of Chinese universities. The reliance on self-reported data to assess instructor competence and perceived student progress constitutes a limitation. Future research should include a more diverse sample from many provinces across China to capture instructors' needs.

Methodologically, this quantitative study lacks the depth provided by qualitative data; thus, employing a mixed-methods approach in future studies would yield a more comprehensive perspective. Despite its limitations, this study offers several notable strengths. It identifies the teaching needs of Chinese instructors at the tertiary level, which contributes valuable insights for researchers interested in this field. Furthermore, the study highlights the potential for integrating ICT tools and blended learning approaches, which can foster a more active, student-centered learning environment. These findings are particularly useful for the design and development of an effective AEW module.

7. References

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