

New graduate students' perspectives on research writing in English: A case study in Taiwan

By *Judy Maxwell*

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Graduate students often have to prepare a thesis to fulfil degree requirements. Research on thesis writing has thus received increasing scholarly attention. However, the literature has generally used student writers at the thesis and dissertation writing stage as informants. Perceptions and difficulties of new graduate students are seldom addressed. In this case study, in-depth interviews were conducted with four first-year Taiwanese EFL graduate students, who were attending a master's program where English was the language for all the course work and thesis writing. Issues addressed in the interviews included students' major concerns, difficulties encountered in the research/writing process, and their perceived needs in research writing instruction. Results indicate that selecting a topic and reviewing the literature were the students' major concerns about research writing. Additionally, they exhibited a rather laid-back attitude towards the language problem, a pervasive concern for many English L2 researchers. Finally, they were found to hold different opinions about research writing instruction, suggesting that traditional academic writing or research methods courses may not adequately address students' needs in research writing. In response to this problem, formative feedback and personalized guidance are called for. The alternative approaches proposed in this paper have implications for stakeholders including academic language and learning (ALL) professionals.

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