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METHODOLOGY FOR DEVELOPING INTEGRATED (SYNTHESIS) ACADEMIC WRITING SKILLS IN ENGLISH AMONG PHILOLOGY UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS BASED ON MULTI-SOURCE TEXTS

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Abstract: The development of academic writing competence in English among undergraduate philology students requires more than the acquisition of grammatical accuracy, academic vocabulary, and conventional essay organization. In university contexts, students are increasingly expected to read several academic sources, identify relevant information, evaluate and compare competing perspectives, transform source material through paraphrasing and summarization, establish intertextual relationships, and construct an independent written argument. These requirements make integrated synthesis writing a particularly important component of academic literacy. The present article develops a literature-informed methodology for improving integrated synthesis academic writing skills among philology undergraduate students through systematic work with multi-source texts. The study adopts a qualitative analytical methodology based on established research into integrated writing, source-based writing, reading-to-write processes, discourse synthesis, source use, and academic argumentation. The analysis indicates that synthesis writing should be understood as a recursive reading-writing activity rather than a linear process in which reading simply precedes writing. On this basis, the article proposes a five-stage instructional methodology comprising source awareness, source mapping and comparison, controlled synthesis, guided academic synthesis, and independent research-based writing. The methodology incorporates source matrices, comparative reading, synthesis maps, paraphrasing and transformation tasks, citation and attribution practice, argument construction, peer review, and recursive revision. A multidimensional assessment framework is also proposed, covering source comprehension, source integration, synthesis and argumentation, organization and coherence, and academic language and citation. The proposed framework is particularly relevant to philology education because students routinely engage with interconnected linguistic, literary, theoretical, and critical texts. The article provides a theoretically grounded methodological model that can subsequently be subjected to empirical validation in an undergraduate EFL context.

Keywords: academic writing, integrated writing, synthesis writing, source-based writing, multi-source texts, reading-to-write, EFL, philology students, source integration, academic literacy, academic argumentation.

1. Introduction

Academic writing in English at university level is increasingly characterized by the integration of information obtained from multiple sources. Unlike independent writing tasks, in which students may rely predominantly on their existing knowledge and personal reasoning, source-based academic writing requires them to comprehend external texts, select relevant information, transform that information, acknowledge source contributions, and incorporate evidence into an independently organized argument. Consequently, academic writing competence cannot be adequately represented

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by grammatical accuracy or lexical knowledge alone. It also involves the ability to establish meaningful relationships between source material and the writer's developing text.

The growing importance of integrated writing is reflected in second-language writing research. Plakans and Gebril examined 480 TOEFL iBT integrated writing performances and analyzed three dimensions of source use: the importance of source ideas selected by writers, the relative use of reading and listening sources, and the borrowing of exact source wording. Their findings showed that source-use features accounted for more than 50% of the variance in scores. The selection of important source ideas and effective use of the listening source were associated more strongly with performance, whereas dependence on the reading source and verbatim borrowing were negatively related to score levels. These findings are significant for academic writing pedagogy because they demonstrate that the quality of source integration matters, not simply the quantity of source material included in a text.

The conceptual complexity of source-based writing becomes particularly evident when it is treated as a reading-to-write activity. McCulloch's investigation of L2 postgraduate writers emphasized the need to examine source use across the reading-to-writing continuum rather than concentrating exclusively on the final written product. The study examined how students engaged with sources while completing authentic academic writing tasks, thereby emphasizing the interaction between reading processes and writing processes. This perspective is especially relevant to philology students, whose academic work often requires them to interpret and compare several texts before producing an analytical or research-oriented written response.

Synthesis writing represents a particularly demanding form of source-based writing. It requires the writer to move beyond reporting what individual sources say and to establish relationships among their ideas. Vandermeulen et al. define synthesis writing as a process in which students alternate between reader and writer roles, select relevant information, compare and contrast source material, and integrate ideas from different texts into a new text organized around a central theme. Their study explicitly characterizes synthesis writing as a hybrid task rather than a simple "reading-then-writing" activity. The authors further emphasize that successful synthesis involves recursion and mediation between reading and writing, meaning that writers repeatedly return to sources while developing and revising their own text. [1, pp. 239–242]

The empirical evidence also indicates that synthesis does not develop automatically from general writing practice. Doolan's analysis of post-secondary L1 and L2 source-based writing found that both groups produced relatively few instances of genuine synthesis, while L1 texts demonstrated greater transformation of source ideas than L2 texts. This finding is pedagogically important because it demonstrates that students may know how to summarize or paraphrase individual sources without necessarily knowing how to synthesize several sources into an independent academic argument.

The distinction between source reproduction and conceptual integration is also supported by research into integrated writing. Ye and Liu identify discourse synthesis as involving three fundamental processes—organizing, selecting, and connecting—and describe skill integration as encompassing both conceptual processes, such as selecting and organizing source ideas, and textual processes, such as transforming source language. [2, p. 2] Their mixed-method study of EFL learners further identified source reading, comprehension monitoring, planning, language monitoring, narration monitoring, and continuity evaluation as interacting components of integrated writing. [2, pp. 5–6]

The relationship between source use and argumentation provides another important dimension of the problem. Chuang and Yan examined 300 L2 integrated argumentative writing performances and

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analyzed source integration style, interpretation accuracy, integration purpose, argument structure, and reasoning quality. Their findings indicate that the relationship between source use, argumentation, and writing proficiency is complex rather than directly linear. This suggests that simply requiring students to use more sources cannot guarantee better academic writing. Instruction must instead teach students how and why sources should be integrated into an argument.

Research on synthesis processes provides further evidence for the importance of purposeful source engagement. Vandermeulen et al. analyzed the writing processes of 294 students and found that source-related activities varied over different phases of writing. The researchers examined time spent consulting sources, transitions between sources, and transitions between sources and the developing synthesis text. [1, pp. 243–246] Their findings showed that source-related activity should not be interpreted independently of the stage of writing in which it occurs. In particular, the study identified meaningful relationships between source use patterns and text quality and developed models explaining 24.6% of the variance in argumentative synthesis quality and 16.2% in informative synthesis quality. [1, pp. 256–257]

The above findings reveal an important methodological problem. Students cannot be expected to become competent synthesis writers merely by receiving academic texts and being instructed to "write an essay using the sources." They need explicit instruction in source comprehension, source evaluation, information selection, comparison, transformation, citation, synthesis, argumentation, and revision. This problem is particularly relevant to undergraduate philology programmes, where students encounter multiple theoretical, linguistic, literary, and critical sources but may not always receive systematic instruction in how these sources should be transformed into an integrated academic text.

Therefore, the purpose of the present article is to develop a theoretically grounded methodology for teaching integrated synthesis academic writing in English to philology undergraduate students through multi-source texts. The article specifically aims to: (1) conceptualize synthesis writing as an integrated reading-writing process; (2) identify the principal cognitive, linguistic, rhetorical, and source-management operations involved in synthesis; (3) develop a staged instructional methodology; and (4) propose an assessment framework for evaluating students' synthesis-writing competence.

The central research question is formulated as follows:

How can multi-source texts be systematically integrated into an instructional methodology for developing English synthesis academic writing skills among undergraduate philology students?

2. Materials and Methods

The present study employs a qualitative literature-based methodological design. It does not claim to report original classroom experiment results, because no independent participant dataset was collected for the present article. Instead, the methodology was developed through analytical synthesis of established empirical and theoretical research on integrated writing, source-based writing, reading-to-write processes, synthesis writing, source use, and argumentation.

The source base includes research published in major international journals in second-language writing, English for Academic Purposes, reading and writing, and applied psychology. Particular analytical attention was given to studies that investigated actual student writing performances, source-use behavior, reading-writing interaction, synthesis processes, and relationships between source use and writing quality. The principal evidence base includes Plakans and Gebril's analysis of 480 TOEFL

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integrated writing performances, McCulloch's reading-to-write investigation, Doolan's analysis of L1/L2 source integration, Vandermeulen et al.'s process analysis of 294 synthesis writers, Chuang and Yan's analysis of 300 integrated argumentative performances, and Ye and Liu's mixed-method investigation of EFL integrated writing processes.

The methodological synthesis proceeded through four analytical steps. First, recurring constructs were identified across the literature, including source comprehension, selection, organization, connection, transformation, source attribution, planning, monitoring, argumentation, and revision. Second, these constructs were grouped according to their cognitive and rhetorical functions. Third, the resulting components were organized into a progressive instructional sequence appropriate for undergraduate EFL learners. Fourth, an assessment framework was derived from the dimensions repeatedly emphasized in synthesis-writing research.

The resulting model conceptualizes integrated synthesis writing as a recursive process rather than a linear sequence. The basic process can be represented as:

Multi-source reading → comprehension monitoring → source evaluation → information selection → cross-source comparison → transformation/paraphrasing → source attribution → synthesis → academic argument → drafting → revision → renewed source consultation.

This model is consistent with the finding that synthesis writing involves repeated alternation between reading and writing activities. Vandermeulen et al. explicitly report that students alternate between reader and writer roles and that source-related activities should recur throughout the writing process. [1, pp. 239–242] Ye and Liu similarly identify reading, comprehension monitoring, planning, language monitoring, and continuity evaluation as interconnected components of EFL integrated writing. [2, pp. 5–6]

The proposed methodology therefore consists of five progressive instructional stages:

Stage 1 — Source Awareness

Students learn to identify the purpose, main claim, supporting evidence, key concepts, terminology, authorial position, and rhetorical orientation of individual academic sources. At this stage, the teacher models active academic reading rather than asking students to memorize information.

Stage 2 — Source Mapping and Comparison

Students work with two or more sources and record central claims, evidence, similarities, differences, contradictions, extensions, and possible relationships. A source matrix is introduced as a planning tool.

Stage 3 — Controlled Synthesis

Students produce short paragraphs based on two or three sources. Each paragraph contains a controlling idea, evidence from multiple sources, an explicit relationship between the sources, and an interpretive statement.

Stage 4 — Guided Academic Synthesis

Students work with three to five sources to construct an extended synthesis. Teacher scaffolding is progressively reduced, while students assume greater responsibility for source selection, comparison, organization, and argument development.

Stage 5 — Independent Research-Based Writing

Students independently formulate a research question, identify relevant academic sources, construct a source matrix, develop a synthesis-based argument, produce a complete academic paper, and revise it through peer and self-assessment.

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This staged progression is intended to move students from source-dependent reproduction toward writer-controlled synthesis.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Conceptual structure of integrated synthesis writing

The literature analysis demonstrates that integrated synthesis writing consists of several interdependent layers. At the first layer, students must understand the source material. At the second, they must determine which information is relevant to their writing purpose. At the third, they must establish relationships between sources. At the fourth, they must transform selected information into their own academic discourse. At the fifth, they must use the integrated evidence to develop an independent argument.

This progression can be expressed as:

Comprehension → Selection → Connection → Transformation → Integration → Interpretation → Argument.

The importance of selection, organization, and connection is directly supported by Ye and Liu's discussion of discourse synthesis, which identifies these processes as central to integrated writing. [2, p. 2] Their discussion also distinguishes conceptual integration from textual integration, emphasizing that students must both organize source ideas and transform source language. [2, p. 2]

Accordingly, a student who merely reproduces information from several sources has not necessarily demonstrated synthesis. Genuine synthesis requires the construction of a new relationship among source ideas.

3.2. Source awareness and critical reading

The first stage of the proposed methodology focuses on source awareness. Students should be taught to ask five fundamental questions when reading an academic source:

1. What is the author's central claim?
2. What evidence supports this claim?
3. What concepts are essential to the argument?
4. How does this source relate to the research question?
5. How does this source agree or disagree with other sources?

This procedure changes reading from passive information collection into purposeful academic reading.

Ye and Liu's empirical analysis found that EFL learners engaged in source reading through activities such as identifying important information, scanning, careful reading, rereading, summarizing, and inference-making. [2, pp. 5–6] These findings support the incorporation of explicit source-reading strategies into writing instruction.

For philology students, source awareness should also include attention to disciplinary discourse. A literary criticism article, linguistic research article, theoretical chapter, and empirical study may discuss the same topic but use different forms of evidence and disciplinary reasoning. Students should therefore be taught to recognize not only **what** a source says but also **how** it constructs knowledge.

3.3. Source matrix as an instructional instrument

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The source matrix constitutes a central component of the proposed methodology. It should be used before drafting and should contain at least the following categories:

Source	Central claim	Evidence	Key concept	Agreement with other sources	Difference/contradiction	Potential role in argument
Source A	Main argument	Supporting evidence	Concept 1	Source B	Source C	Background
Source B	Main argument	Supporting evidence	Concept 2	Source A	Source D	Supporting evidence
Source C	Main argument	Supporting evidence	Concept 3	Source D	Source A	Counterargument
Source D	Main argument	Supporting evidence	Concept 4	Source C	Source B	Interpretation

The matrix is not intended to replace writing. Its purpose is to externalize relationships between sources before students begin constructing the final text.

This approach is supported by research showing that successful synthesis depends on comparing and contrasting source information and organizing it around an overarching theme. Vandermeulen et al. report that synthesis involves comparing and contrasting information from different sources, linking sources to one another, and integrating the information into a new independent text. [1, pp. 239–242]

3.4. From summary to synthesis

A fundamental methodological distinction must be made between summary and synthesis.

A summary primarily answers:

What does this source say?

A synthesis answers:

What becomes evident when the relevant ideas from several sources are considered together?

Consider the following simplified structure:

Summary-based paragraph:

Source A says X. Source B says Y. Source C says Z.

Synthesis-based paragraph:

Source A establishes X, while Source B develops this position by demonstrating Y. Source C, however, challenges this interpretation by emphasizing Z. Taken together, the three sources suggest that...

The second structure creates a new conceptual relationship. The writer does not merely place sources next to one another; the writer establishes a relationship among them.

This distinction is supported by Doolan's finding that genuine synthesis was relatively rare in both L1 and L2 post-secondary source-based writing, while L1 texts demonstrated more transformation of source ideas than L2 texts. The implication is that synthesis should be taught explicitly rather than assumed to emerge automatically from general exposure to academic texts.

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3.5. Paraphrasing and transformation of source information

A major component of synthesis instruction is the transformation of source information. Students should learn that paraphrasing does not mean replacing individual words with synonyms. Effective paraphrasing requires reconstructing the meaning of the source within a new linguistic and rhetorical structure.

The instructional sequence should therefore be:

Understand → Close the source → Recall the meaning → Reconstruct the idea → Compare with the source → Cite the source.

The final comparison with the source is essential because students must verify that their paraphrase preserves the original meaning.

This component is consistent with Ye and Liu's distinction between conceptual and textual integration. Their discussion identifies transforming source language as part of textual integration, while selecting, organizing, and connecting source ideas constitute conceptual integration. [2, p. 2]

3.6. Cross-source connection

The most important transition in the proposed methodology occurs when students move from source-by-source processing to cross-source reasoning.

Students should be trained to classify relationships among sources as:

agreement → extension → qualification → contrast → contradiction → application.

For example:

- Agreement: Source A and Source B reach similar conclusions.
- Extension: Source B develops an argument introduced by Source A.
- Qualification: Source B accepts the general argument of Source A but limits its applicability.
- Contrast: Source B approaches the issue from a different perspective.
- Contradiction: Source B directly challenges an important claim in Source A.
- Application: Source B provides evidence demonstrating how the theoretical claim of Source A operates in a particular context.

This classification gives students a concrete mechanism for moving from reading comprehension to synthesis.

Vandermeulen et al. demonstrate the importance of switching between sources during synthesis. Their process analysis found that source-related activities vary across stages of writing and that successful synthesis involves specific patterns of interaction with sources rather than indiscriminate source consultation. [1, pp. 250–257]

3.7. Development of the academic writer's voice

A central objective of synthesis writing instruction is the development of an independent academic voice.

The proposed methodology adopts the following principle:

Sources provide evidence; the writer controls the argument.

Students should therefore learn to distinguish three levels:

Source claim → Writer's interpretation → Writer's argument.

For example:

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Source claim:
Smith argues that extensive reading contributes to lexical development.

Writer's interpretation:
This finding suggests that reading quantity may influence the linguistic resources available to students during academic writing.

Writer's argument:
For philology undergraduates, therefore, systematic reading of discipline-specific sources should be incorporated into academic writing instruction rather than treated as a separate preparatory activity.

The third statement belongs to the writer. The source supports the argument but does not replace it.

This distinction is particularly important because source use and argumentation are interconnected. Chuang and Yan's analysis of 300 integrated argumentative writing performances demonstrated that source integration characteristics are related to argumentation effectiveness in a complex way, involving integration style, interpretation accuracy, integration purpose, argument structure, and reasoning quality.

3.8. Recursive reading-writing process

The proposed methodology deliberately avoids a rigid sequence in which students finish reading all sources and only then begin writing. Instead, students are expected to return to sources throughout the composing process.

The instructional cycle is therefore:

Read → Note → Compare → Plan → Draft → Return to source → Verify → Revise → Synthesize → Edit.

Vandermeulen et al. emphasize that synthesis writing is characterized by recurring and alternating reading and writing activities and that recursive processes are important for synthesis quality. [1, pp. 239–242] Their analysis further demonstrated that the temporal distribution of source-related activities matters and that successful synthesis cannot be explained by a single linear relationship between source consultation and text quality. [1, pp. 250–257]

Ye and Liu similarly identified interacting processes including source reading, comprehension monitoring, planning, language monitoring, and continuity evaluation. [2, pp. 5–6]

These findings support the pedagogical principle that academic writing instruction should teach students when and why to return to a source, not merely how to cite it.

3.9. Five-stage instructional methodology

The complete methodology can be represented as follows.

Stage 1. Source Awareness

Students analyze two academic texts on the same topic.

Main activities:

- identifying the central claim;
- locating supporting evidence;
- identifying key terminology;
- distinguishing fact, interpretation, and evaluation;
- identifying the author's position;

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- producing a short source summary.

Expected outcome:

The student can accurately represent the central idea of an individual source.

Stage 2. Source Mapping and Comparison

Students work with three sources.

Main activities:

- completing a source matrix;
- identifying agreement and disagreement;
- identifying complementary information;
- identifying contradictions;
- creating a synthesis map.

Expected outcome:

The student can explain relationships among sources.

Stage 3. Controlled Synthesis

Students write 150–200-word synthesis paragraphs using two or three sources.

Paragraph structure:

Controlling idea → Source A → Source B → Relationship → Interpretation.

Expected outcome:

The student can integrate several source ideas within one coherent paragraph.

Stage 4. Guided Academic Synthesis

Students work with three to five sources and produce a 500–700-word synthesis essay.

Main activities:

- research question formulation;
- source evaluation;
- source matrix;
- thesis development;
- paragraph planning;
- synthesis drafting;
- citation;
- peer review;
- revision.

Expected outcome:

The student can produce a coherent multi-source academic text with a developing independent argument.

Stage 5. Independent Research-Based Writing

Students independently select a topic, identify sources, construct an argument, and produce a research-based academic paper.

Expected outcome:

The student can independently perform the complete synthesis-writing cycle.

3.10. Assessment framework

The proposed methodology requires an assessment system that evaluates both language and source integration. A five-dimensional analytic rubric is therefore proposed.

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Criterion	Weight	Assessment focus
Source comprehension	20%	Accurate representation of source ideas
Source integration	25%	Meaningful relationships among multiple sources
Synthesis and argumentation	25%	Independent claim, reasoning and evidence
Organization and coherence	15%	Logical structure and connections
Academic language and citation	15%	Grammar, academic vocabulary, paraphrasing and referencing
Total	**100%**	

The weighting is a **proposed methodological framework**, not an experimentally validated scoring system. It should therefore be empirically tested and adjusted in future classroom research.

The four principal synthesis-quality dimensions identified by Vandermeulen et al.—relevance and correctness of information, integration of sources into a new text with its own structure and overarching theme, coherence and cohesion, and language use—provide an important empirical basis for such an assessment framework. [1, pp. 244–245]

4. Conclusion

The present study has developed a literature-informed methodology for improving integrated synthesis academic writing skills in English among undergraduate philology students through systematic work with multi-source texts. The analysis demonstrates that synthesis writing is substantially more complex than conventional single-source essay writing because it requires students to coordinate reading, source evaluation, information selection, comparison, transformation, citation, argumentation, and revision.

The reviewed research provides several important methodological conclusions. First, integrated writing should be understood as a reading-writing activity rather than as writing accompanied by reading. Research has demonstrated that source comprehension, planning, language monitoring, and other processes interact during integrated writing. [2, pp. 5–6] Second, synthesis requires explicit relationships among sources. Students must learn to compare, contrast, extend, qualify, and challenge source positions rather than reproduce them independently. [1, pp. 239–242] Third, source integration must be connected to the development of an independent argument. Source use without interpretation does not necessarily produce effective academic writing. Fourth, the timing and organization of source-related activities during writing can influence synthesis quality, which supports a recursive rather than strictly linear instructional model. [1, pp. 250–257]

On this basis, the article proposes a five-stage methodology: **source awareness; source mapping and comparison; controlled synthesis; guided academic synthesis; and independent research-based writing**. The methodology is supported by source matrices, synthesis maps, comparative reading, paraphrasing and transformation activities, citation practice, argument construction, peer review, and recursive revision.

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The principal methodological proposition is that students should progress from **source comprehension to source transformation, from transformation to cross-source connection, and from connection to independent academic argumentation**. Such progression is particularly appropriate for philology students because their disciplinary learning routinely involves the analysis of linguistic, literary, theoretical, and critical texts.

The proposed assessment framework extends this approach by evaluating five dimensions: source comprehension, source integration, synthesis and argumentation, organization and coherence, and academic language and citation. However, the weighting proposed in this article is methodological rather than empirically validated. Future research should therefore test the framework through classroom intervention studies involving undergraduate philology students.

A subsequent empirical study could employ a pre-test/post-test quasi-experimental design, compare an intervention group receiving the proposed multi-source synthesis methodology with a comparison group receiving conventional academic-writing instruction, and evaluate writing samples using the proposed analytic rubric. Such research would make it possible to determine whether the methodology produces measurable improvements in source integration, synthesis quality, argumentation, coherence, and academic language.

Overall, the literature indicates that effective synthesis writing should not be taught as a final writing product alone. It should be developed as a recursive academic literacy process in which students learn to read critically, select strategically, connect conceptually, transform linguistically, argue independently, and revise reflectively.

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