



How academic writing took a toll on my creative writing skills

The academic writing process is challenging and exhausting. It requires specific formats, guidelines, and a formal tone that often leaves little room for personal expression.

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I have always thought of myself as a creative writer, and it gave me the voice of freedom like nothing else could. It was a space where my imagination ran wild, and I could create entire worlds through my writing. Since I loved writing so much, I had no trouble putting equal effort into my academic essays, not realising that I would become a jargon kiln with all my creative juices drained.

The academic writing process is challenging and exhausting. It requires specific formats, guidelines, and a formal tone that often leaves little room for personal expression. Even though my grades went up as I habituated myself to writing structured, objective essays, my imagination gradually waned.

I remember the exact moment it dawned on me. I sat down to work on the first draft of my novel, looking forward to etching my mind's tales into articulation. An hour later, I stared at a blank page as my sore index finger hit the backspace button for the umpteenth time. For the first time in ten years, the unending well of inspiration felt drained, replaced by a sterile stream of academic jargon that made my poetry colourless and my prose mundane.

My ego was not having it because, quite

ironically, I had written three term papers several pages in length that same week. It only highlighted how cruelly my academic pursuits had sapped my creative writing ability. This rude awakening prompted me to investigate further and seek solutions.

I decided that the writing rut could only be solved by approaching it from a scholarly angle – taking it by its root. I researched and scanned every relevant piece of literature to determine if my slump was an outlier or indicative of something bigger. Since writers love to write and do research about writing, I found several studies that looked at the side effects of academic writing.

One study found that the strict rules and conventions of academic writing can hinder creativity and originality because of the need to prove claims with facts and remain objective. Another study followed up with a similar claim and discovered that academic writers lost their enthusiasm for creative writing because producing analyses from pre-existing schema had killed their creativity.

I took the results with a grain of salt. The once lively voice of creation dancing across the pages of my stories has now been thwarted by Scrooge. It would take deliberate effort to regain spontaneity and independence, so I

made some lifestyle changes. I noticed results immediately after establishing a routine which included reading widely across genres for inspiration, joining online writing forums, scheduling my writing sessions, and so on.

I am realising the benefits of group brainstorming sessions with consistent and constructive feedback from my fellow writers. Writing flash fiction feels less intimidating now. I am also taking breaks to go outside and be by myself as I experiment with narrative techniques, implement new ideas, and take some calculated risks to enhance my plot. I learned the hard way that writing is a demanding mental activity, whether for pleasure or for a class, it should never be taken lightly.

References:

1. Smith, A., & Johnson, B. (2019). *The impact of academic writing on creativity: A systematic review.*
2. Brown, C., Davis, E., & Thompson, L. (2021). *Exploring the effects of academic writing on creative writing motivation and enjoyment.*

Ask Joyeeta to stop watching teen dramas at [Instagram.com/nahianjamaljoyeeta](https://www.instagram.com/nahianjamaljoyeeta).

Reuniting with your long-distance friends

RAFID KHANDAKER

When making friends at school, work, or anywhere else, we seldom really think of the possibility that one day our paths will diverge in unforeseen ways. Such is the case for most human relationships, where we assume things will remain the same forever, until one day, reality comes crashing in and you realise almost all your friends are now scattered around the world, and you're suddenly on your own. Yet, as with the temporal nature of presence, absence is not permanent either, and when the fated time finally comes for you to reunite with them, it's nothing short of magical.

Reunion with your long distance friends, for many, is a long-awaited moment that at times feels impossible. And for those of us who are lucky enough to experience it, it is almost surreal. Whether it be a carefully crafted surprise at a restaurant or waiting for hours at the airport, the mixture of emotions when finally seeing a loved one's face after spending years apart is too overwhelming to process immediately. You can't help but become overcome with emotions – emotions that have been tucked away for so long only to resurface years later.

The thing with loving people who you're apart from is that your heart starts finding ways to adapt, forcing your feelings to take a backseat. This allows us to continue functioning as normal without grief obstructing our daily activities. As a result, it may sometimes feel like you're numb to these emotions, but you realise that you're really not when you finally get the chance to speak to those people again, and you're reminded of all the memories of the good old days.

The days and weeks that follow are a culmination of years' worth of hopeful planning, where you get to recoup all the lost time and catch up on each other's lives. It's truly one of the most fun as well as intimate times, as you get to learn about all the ridiculous and exciting escapades your friends went on, how they managed to adjust to living in different environments, and witness how they've evolved as people. Nothing is more inspiring than seeing the people you grew up with becoming independent and carving out a life for themselves.

Furthermore, it's even more exciting telling them about your own life and watching their reaction to the person you've become. You gain more respect and a deeper love for each other, which only strengthens the friendship.

This more mature, fully-formed appreciation for each other can be reflected in our future outlook, as we accept the fact that their presence is still temporary, and we'll have to bid adieu one day again. This realisation is bittersweet, as you dread the pain of watching them leave again, but find solace in the fact that they're now far more equipped to take on life than they ever were before. They'll be out there forging a future that is worth all this pain, and that's the biggest motivation for us to do the same. Because in the end, nobody is meant to stick around forever, but the memories, the love, and the camaraderie certainly are.

Rafid is protecting his peace a bit too much. Annoy him at rafidkhandaker@gmail.com.



Concert organisers need to do better

RAIAN ABEDIN

This year, summer kickstarted a slew of concerts varying in size and lineups, all holding a singular promise to deliver an experience worth your time and money. Ever since the end of the pandemic, I have developed a hobby of attending these shows and in 2023, more international artists seem to be interested in performing in Bangladesh.

While this has led to a drastic increase in audience interest, some event organisers have already come under fire for their subpar management of the crowd they sold tickets to.

As an audience and an ardent fan of music, attending these concerts feels like entering a sacred space. But when these spaces become wrought with unbearable ventilation and hour-long queues just to enter the overcrowded halls, it can be safe to say that the organisers did not plan this through. This was the case in Anuv Jain's recent concert in Dhaka, which, according to a report by The Daily Star, had an audience of over 6,000 people.

The hall the concert took place in is marketed to have a capacity of a little over 3,000. Why the organisers thought to sell more than double the capacity of the hall's worth of tickets is a question with multifaceted answers, but the end result remains the same – it is the audience who have to suffer through an uncomfortable time just to see their beloved artists.

But where does this lead us? One comment many parties make whenever faced with a messy concert featuring an international artist is that Dhaka does not have the infrastructure for large-scale concerts. There is truth to this. Most indoor halls in Bangladesh do not have the capacity for gigantic gatherings, and outdoor concerts would be an even worse



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

idea in the heat of Dhaka summers. Yet, in what concerts we do see organised, there is a veritable presence of sloppy management which, when confronted, is handwaved away by organising bodies.

This is precisely what happened with the organising bodies behind the Anuv Jain concert. When asked for answers, none were found. Instead, certain managers went on social media to complain about

the ungrateful behaviour coming from the audience. As a frequent presence in these spaces, my safety and basic needs are not things I view as demanding. Having these ideas echoed by organisers instead of seeing any level of acknowledgement of mismanagement is terrifying. If these same people are running the business, how can we guarantee a good time for the audience who spent so much just to be there?

Recently, another show featuring Taalpatar Shepai, a legendary Indian act, was also hosted in Dhaka. With a crowd not nearly as thick as in an Anuv Jain show and a choice of venue with far better ventilation, this was a show met with an overwhelmingly positive reception. While some may argue that the lower crowd density simply means the show was not as popular, the organisers reported having

sold out the venue nearly two weeks before the concert date.

Managing sales and picking out the right venue is crucial if Dhaka is headed down the road of indoor concerts. Yet, if this sloppy management is to continue, it most certainly won't be sustainable for these companies.

Raian loves shouting.