

ANALYZING STUDENTS' CHALLENGES IN WRITING AUDIO SCRIPTS FOR DISTANCE LEARNING: A CASE STUDY IN THE AUDIO/RADIO PRODUCTION COURSE

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Abstract

The ability to write effective scripts is a fundamental skill that plays a crucial role in the production of audio media/radio, particularly in the context of distance education and media-based learning. This study aims to identify and analyze the difficulties faced by students in writing educational audio scripts in the Audio/Radio Media Production course. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed, involving students who had completed the course as participants. Data were collected through observations, open-ended questionnaires, and interviews to explore the challenges students encountered in scriptwriting. The results of the study indicate that students faced difficulties in composing communicative scripts, selecting appropriate language styles for audio, creating synopses, determining learning content, and accurately managing the script duration. These findings are expected to serve as a basis for evaluating and developing more effective learning strategies in teaching Audio/Radio Media Production, particularly around educational audio scriptwriting.

Keywords: Audio learning media, difficulties in writing scripts, distance education, learning audio script.

1 INTRODUCTION

Distance education continues to grow rapidly by utilizing digital technology to provide flexible and accessible learning. Audio media, such as podcasts and educational radio broadcasts, are an important means of supporting the learning experience because they are able to convey material effectively and build emotional closeness with listeners (Hernandez-Lopez & Mendoza-Jimenez, 2025). One of the most widely used types of media is audio learning, as it effectively and efficiently conveys educational messages and is accessible in various learning situations. Audio formats, particularly educational radio broadcasts and learning podcasts, play a crucial role in enhancing students' understanding of concepts and enriching their overall learning experiences. (Wakefield et al., 2023). At various universities, students become not only audio consumers, but also content creators through scriptwriting and audio production for academic purposes (Sotério & Linhares Queiroz, 2023).

Audio scriptwriting skills are an essential competency. Audio scripts serve not only as technical guidelines for production, but also as pedagogical instruments that determine the clarity of the

message, the flow of communication, and the appeal of learning (Ferrington, 2021; McLeish & Link, 2016). However, these skills demand special abilities that are different from academic writing, as writers must consider aspects of spoken language, intonation, segmentation, and the listener's imagination (Hennessy, 2019).

Writing audio scripts has different characteristics from academic writing in general. Audio scripts must be clear, concise, and easy to understand, allowing listeners to visualize messages through flowing spoken language. This challenge is reinforced by recent research findings that show that students often struggle to adapt academic language to audio narrative formats, choose the right vocabulary, and manage dialogue structures to suit non-expert audiences (Sotério & Linhares Queiroz, 2023). In the context of distance learning, this difficulty is compounded by the fact that students are required to work more independently, often with limited direct feedback from tutors (Ntlhakana et al., 2024).

Recent studies have shown that students still face difficulties in writing and producing audio scripts. Challenges that often arise include the ability to adapt academic language to communicative narrative forms, limitations in choosing vocabulary that is appropriate for non-expert audiences, and obstacles in managing dialogue structure and storylines. In addition, limited technical experience in integrating aspects of audio production, such as sound quality, duration, and delivery tempo, is also a significant obstacle. Recent research also confirms accessibility barriers, such as podcast/vodcast durations that are too long, information overload, and language complexity that is difficult for students to understand (Mohale, 2024). Early-semester students face even greater difficulties in meeting academic writing conventions, producing appropriate content, and using citations and references correctly when asked to create audio-based manuscripts (Mohale, 2025).

In addition, the study shows that the use of audio features in education still faces limitations, especially related to actionable feedback and content readability for students (Pardo et al., 2025). Technical barriers such as sound quality, narrative speed, and media duration have also been shown to affect the effectiveness of audio-based learning experiences (Zhan, 2023). Thus, PJJ students not only face challenges in terms of the substance of manuscript writing, but also complex technical and pedagogical constraints.

Some previous studies have highlighted the effectiveness of audio media in supporting learning (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008; Ko & Rossen, 2017). However, an in-depth study of students' challenges in writing audio scripts is still relatively limited. In fact, understanding the

difficulties experienced by students can make an important contribution to improving instructional design, learning strategies, and curriculum based on audio media production in higher education.

Based on this context, this study aims to analyze the challenges faced by students in writing audio scripts in the Audio/Radio Media Production course at the Universitas Terbuka. Using a case study approach, this study seeks to explore student experiences in depth to produce practical recommendations for tutors and learning designers in developing more effective learning strategies in the era of distance education.

2 METHODOLOGY

This study uses mixed methods with a case study design to explore the challenges faced by students in writing learning audio scripts. In the context of learning, the manuscript consists of introductory activities, core activities, and concluding activities. The assessment of the quality of student manuscripts is carried out based on the indicators shown in Table 2. Research participants were selected using purposive sampling techniques, involving students who had completed at least two audio script writing tasks and were willing to participate in interviews. Out of a total of 45 students who met the criteria, nine participants were selected purposively. Data collection was carried out through audio script documents collected during online tutorials, as well as in-depth interviews to strengthen understanding of context. Data analysis was carried out using a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. Quantitative data is in the form of a Likert scale assessment score of 1–4, while qualitative data is used to interpret the data and to strengthen and deepen quantitative findings. Quantitative data were analyzed using the assessment criteria described in Table 1.

Table 1. Quantitative data analysis

Scale	Criterion
1,00 – 1,49	Very less
1,50 – 2,49	Less
2,50 – 3,49	Good
3,50 – 4,00	Excellent

Table 2. Script quality assessment instrument grid

No	Indicator	Criterion
A. Introductory Activities		
1	Greetings and motivation	In the manuscript there are greetings, friendly openings, arousing students' interest in learning
2	Purpose delivery	The purpose of learning is clearly stated and easy to understand
3	Contextual relevance	There is a connection between the material and the students' real lives.
B. Core Activities		

1	Content	Content according to competence, structured, logical
2	Language clarity	Communicative language, easy to understand, audience-appropriate
3	Examples/illustrations	Adanya contoh nyata, analogi, atau cerita pendukung
4	Feedback	Memberi pertanyaan reflektif/latihan sederhana
C. Closing Activities		
1	Summary	The content is summarized briefly and clearly
2	Key message emphasis	There is a reaffirmation of key concepts
3	Follow-up	There is an invitation to further study/reflection assignments
4	Closure	Friendly & motivating closing greetings

3 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Finding

The results of the assessment of the quality of learning audio manuscripts written by students, including aspects of the introductory, core activities, and closing activities, are presented in Table 3, Table 4, and Table 5.

Table 3. Results of the preliminary aspect manuscript quality assessment

Indicator	Average	Category	Interpretation
Greetings and motivation	1,78	Less	There have been friendly greetings/introductions and motivational efforts, but they have not been consistent and are still simple
Purpose delivery	1,22	Very less	Learning objectives are rarely written clearly and easily understood
Contextual relevance	1,22	Very less	There is almost no correlation of the material with the real life/experience of the students

Table 4. Results of the quality assessment of the manuscript aspects of the core activities

Indicator	Average	Category	Interpretation
Content	1,89	Less	The material presented is quite structured and logical, but it is not optimal or not fully in accordance with competence
Language clarity	1,44	Very less	Language is often rigid, lacking communicative, and not yet tailored to the audience
Examples/illustrations	1,00	Very less	There are almost no real examples, analogies, or supporting stories.
Feedback	1,22	Very less	Rarely give reflective questions or simple exercises to engage the reader.

Table 5. The results of the quality assessment of the manuscript aspect of the closing activity

Indicator	Average	Category	Interpretation
Summary	1,33	Very less	Summaries are less clear and concise, often just regular repetitions
Key message emphasis	1,44	Very less	The reaffirmation of key concepts is still minimal and less attractive
Follow-up	1,67	Less	There are efforts to provide further learning directions/reflection tasks, but they have not been consistent
Closure	1,00	Very less	Friendly and motivating closing greetings are almost nowhere to be found

3.2 Discussion

The results of the study show that students' ability to write learning audio scripts is still in the low category. Most indicators are in the range of Very Less (1.00–1.44) and Less (1.50–1.89). The highest scores were only found in the presentation of the *material* (1.89 – Less), while other indicators such as *greeting & motivation* (1.78 – Less), *follow-up* (1.67 – Less), as well as indicators of *goal delivery* (1.22), *feedback* (1.22), *examples/illustrations* (1.00), and *communicative closing* (1.00) were in the Very Poor category.

These findings indicate that students struggle to adapt academic language into communicative audio narratives. The *language clarity score* of only 1.44 indicates that the manuscript is still rigid and formal, so it is not in accordance with oral characteristics. College students often encounter obstacles in simplifying academic vocabulary, crafting flowing conversations, and writing short, listener-friendly sentences. These findings are in line with (Almgren Bäck et al., 2024; Hernandez-Lopez & Mendoza-Jimenez, 2025; Kitto et al., 2023) which states that audio scripting demands different linguistic competencies from traditional academic writing. In addition, the results of the research conducted by (Kitto et al., 2023) It shows that *the process of digital storytelling* in the context of higher education often requires students to switch from academic styles to more personal and communicative narratives, while at the same time requiring pedagogical support to overcome the uncertainty of learning identity.

In addition to language problems, the ability to enrich manuscripts with examples and illustrations is also very weak (1.00 – Very Poor). Students rarely include analogies or supporting stories to clarify concepts. In fact, illustrations are important to help the audience understand and increase distance learner engagement (Kitto et al., 2023). These findings are in line with the results of research conducted by (Endres et al., 2024; Nourinezhad et al., 2021)

who found that distance education students still find it difficult to insert context and storytelling in audio scripts.

From the pedagogical side, the lack of feedback (1.22 – Very Poor) and the low quality of the closing (summary 1.33; emphasis on the main message 1.44; communicative closing 1.00) indicate that students are not used to asking reflective questions, summarizing the core of the material, or closing with a motivating greeting. This lack of practice weakens the interactivity and clarity of the message. In the context of distance education, this situation is exacerbated by the limited direct interaction with tutors, making it difficult for students to obtain corrections or guidance to improve the manuscript (Peng et al., 2025).

Technical problems also arise, although they are not the main focus of quantitative assessment. Some students expressed difficulties in maintaining intonation, tempo, and voice quality when recording scripts. The limited mastery of audio editing software also affects the attractiveness and clarity of the result. These findings support the findings (Beddes et al., 2023; Kay, 2012) which highlights that the technical quality of audio including sound setting, equipment selection, and editing techniques greatly influences the credibility and appeal of learning materials.

Detailed mapping of the quality of student audio manuscripts based on pedagogical indicators (introduction, core, and conclusion), which was previously rare because most previous studies only highlighted technical aspects of audio production or linguistic barriers (de la Peña & Cassany, 2024; Fantini, 2024). The findings of this study produce student weaknesses in writing comprehensive manuscripts and can be the basis for curriculum development and training strategies for Distance Education students (Kulkov et al., 2024). Practically, these findings require a communicative audio script writing guide module, simple yet applicable audio production technical training, and a fast and targeted digital feedback mechanism. Theoretically, the developed assessment indicators can be used as a new evaluation framework for the research and development of audio-based learning in open and distance education (Engzell et al., 2025; Steuber et al., 2024)

4 CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research and discussion, it can be concluded that students' abilities are still low, especially in adapting academic language into communicative oral narratives, presenting relevant examples, and making interesting and interactive opening and closing. Technical barriers such as sound quality, tempo, and audio editing skills also worsened the

production process. These findings underscore the need for clear writing guidelines, practical audio production technical training, and rapid digital feedback mechanisms to improve the quality of students' audio manuscripts in the context of distance learning.

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