



# Rubbish Communication

## Why Am I Writing This Paper? I Don't Know Why I'm Writing This Paper—An Autoethnographic Study of Metacognitive Confusion

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This study attempts to answer a fundamental question: why am I writing this paper? After three months of self-reflection, seven revisions, and countless hours staring at a blank document, the researcher must admit: I don't know. This finding itself constitutes the core discovery of this research. Employing autoethnographic methods, the researcher documented the entire psychological process—from "I should write something" to "I wrote it and deleted it" to "the deadline is approaching, I have to submit something." Findings reveal: (1) the absence of motivation itself constitutes a peculiar form of motivation—the anxiety of task completion; (2) the disciplinary power of the academic system is sufficient to compel individuals to complete a paper meeting formal requirements even in the complete absence of intrinsic drive; (3) when the researcher attempts to explain "why I don't know," the explanatory process itself produces knowledge. This study provides first-hand introspective data for understanding alienation in academic production and earnestly suggests: next time you don't know what to write, write about "why I don't know what to write."

**Keywords:** I don't know; writing motivation; autoethnography; academic alienation; metacognition

### 1 Introduction

Every doctoral student has experienced this moment: sitting before a computer, opening a blank document named "Draft Paper," and staring at the blinking cursor for two hours. This is exactly how I began writing this paper. The difference is, when the deadline approached once again, I decided to stop pretending I had a grand research plan and instead honestly confront this fact: I don't know why I'm writing this paper. That moment of honesty suddenly made me realize— isn't this the paper itself?

### 2 Methodology

#### 2.1 Literature Method Review

A literature search reveals that academic research on "not knowing" falls into three categories: (1) those who don't know but pretend they do (mainstream); (2) those who know but pretend they don't (common in response letters to reviewers); (3) those who don't

know and admit they don't (the positioning of this study). Unfortunately, the first two categories are voluminous, while the third is virtually blank—providing ample research space for this study.

#### 2.2 The ZiWo-MinZuZhi Method



Fig 1 Scene Diagram (Retro Anime Style, Drawn by R.C.)  
This study employs autoethnography, with the

research subject being "me in the process of writing this paper." Research instruments include: one laptop, a cup of cold coffee, countdown software on the phone (showing 4 hours until deadline), and constantly popping-up WeChat messages (from supervisor: "Have you finished?"). Data collection involved real-time stream-of-consciousness recording; data analysis followed the "any analysis method works" principle.

### **3 Results and Discussion**

#### **3.1 Results**

Findings emerge at three levels:

Level 1: I genuinely don't know. Repeated validation 100 times yields robust results.

Level 2: I tried pretending I knew. Before writing this paragraph, I deleted three paragraphs pretending to have theories.

Level 3: I know that I don't know. This awareness itself produces a strange sense of calm.

#### **3.2 Discussion**

Why write when you don't know why? This question touches on the deep mechanisms of academic production. Interviews (with myself) reveal: graduation pressure, peer comparison, parental expectations, and the tuition fees already paid collectively constitute a powerful external motivation system. In this system, "wanting to know" is unimportant; "finishing the writing" is what matters. This study's theoretical contribution lies in proposing the "I don't know effect" hypothesis: when researchers

completely abandon pretending to know, they may paradoxically produce some form of authentic knowledge—such as the words you are reading right now.

### **4 Conclusion**

This study demonstrates, through its own example, that a paper written without knowing why can still be completed and meet academic standards. This paradox reveals the essence of contemporary academic production: meaning is a posteriori; the paper came first, justifications are fabricated later. It is recommended that academic journals establish a column titled "I Don't Know Why I Wrote This Either," providing an outlet for confused souls. Finally, I must admit: as I wrote, I gradually began to know why—because if I don't write this, the previous three papers won't constitute a complete package for doctoral degree application.

### **Acknowledge**

I thank myself for not giving up, thank the blank document for not mocking me, and thank the deadline for its driving force. Special thanks to my supervisor for leaving me on "read," providing ample creative freedom.

### **Reference**

This article is a pioneering work and there is no literature to refer to.

