



**An Investigation of Writing Difficulties among Second-Level Female Students
At King Khalid University (Abha-Rijal Alma)**

Mahassin Osman Mohammed Gibreel

King Khalid University College of Arts, Sciences Department of English Language

Abstract

There is a general belief among researchers and speakers at conferences and symposia that learning and developing writing skills are considered a difficult task. Academic writing requires conscious effort and much practice in organization, language use and mechanics in writing. This study is an attempt to show that most common types of writing problems among English language female students at King Khalid University. College of ARTs, Sciences and community. Sixty students participated in this study, they were asked to give a sample of own- writing modules and to answer a questionnaire about what they think the reasons behind writing problems they face when they write in English. The data are different types of writing problems among English language female students. The findings of the study showed that students declared the main problems behind their weakness of writing were grammatical weakness, limited training and writing practice, and educational background. The most important recommendation of the study is that, teachers should focus on these themes and pay more attention to these problems, in order to reduce writing weakness.

Keywords: English –writing, Writing approaches, writing problem.

1-1 Introduction

Writing is an important productive skill that can be used in learning other receptive and productive skills (Zhu, 2004). English language is the most widely spoken language in the world. Nowadays, The use of English is more widespread because of the business-environment revolution, the ongoing advances in technology such as internet and other businesses (Pakir, 1999). English as a foreign language and English as a second language (EFL/ESL) learners face many obstacles. Learning and developing writing skills are considered a difficult task. Academic writing requires conscious effort and much practice in organization, Writing encourages thinking and learning, now that it motivates communication and makes thought available for reflection (Mekheimer, 2005). Teh (2005) pointed out that writing is the skill most Malaysian students are less proficient in and they do not know how to accomplish the written tasks in satisfactory ways. Writing is a basic skill that needs to be mastered by all English Language major students. It is believed that writing demands a great deal of skills and conventions such as writing readiness and grammatical rules for the students to become proficient and effective writers Emmons (2003). ÖzgeRazı, (2013) stated that “Turkish students who learn English as a foreign language usually find it difficult to write in it.” Haiwen Mo(2013) investigated the current situation of college English writing teaching in China through , he found that the college students’ writing ability is far from satisfactory. Nunan (1999) states that “the most difficult task to do in language learning is to produce a coherent, fluent, extended piece of writing, which is even more challenging for second language learners.” Written products are often the results of thinking, drafting and revising procedures that require specialized skills, skills that not every speaker develops naturally (Brown, 2001). Research into Arab EFL learners’ writing centres for the most part upon learner’s failure to handle a variety of assignments as prescribed by the syllabus that has constituted their language training. Other things being equal, writing problems are primarily attributed to the students’ linguistic incompetence, immature mastery of rhetorical structure of the English text,

Arabic discourse transfer and the like (Al-Khuweileh and Al-Shoumali, 2000; Al-Hazmi and Schofield, 2007; Fitze and Glasgow, 2009). Implicit in such research findings is the suggestion that learners are to blame for their failure to rise to the expectation of their institutions. Apparently, educational policies have seldom been rendered responsible for defects in learning output in general and demonstration of writing skills in particular. Viz. Such factors as teacher/student ratio, the number of students in the classroom, the number of writing courses, course materials, teaching methodology, etc. have rarely been addressed as possible causes of Arab EFL learners' writing problems. This paper posits that the institutional adoption of outdated writing approaches, and, therefore, the use of writing resources pertaining to them are the main factors to complicate Arab EFL learners' writing practice. In that connection, the paper will apply content analysis to these areas in three Arab Universities: King Saud University (Saudi Arabia), Jordan University of Science and Technology (Jordan) and Al-Akhawayan University (Morocco).

1-2 Theoretical Background

Nofal (2010) conducted a study in which he investigated and scrutinized the reasons behind the weaknesses of English major students in Philadelphia University – Jordan . He stated that “it is difficult for students to express themselves adequately In writing. The most discrete characteristics of a good paragraph are virtually absent in the writing of most students. Unity, consistency, order and coherence are obviously lacking , students fail to signal the direction of their thoughts by the use of transitional words such as, however, moreover, nevertheless, and phrases like , on the other hand, in fact, of course, etc. ”

Bahloul (2007) believes that a main cause of spelling errors, and one that seems to cause most learners of English a big problem in developing their spelling proficiency is the irregularity of the English writing system. This irregularity appears to confuse learners from different language backgrounds, including native speakers. The main cause of this irregularity is that, as Henderson (1981) indicates, there is no One-to-one correspondence between the written word and its pronunciation. Hildreth (1962) also attributes many of the spelling difficulties that most learners of English have to the “inconsistencies in English word structure” (p. 4). Of the four language skills, writing has always been the main concern of EFL practitioners and researchers (June, 2008). Writing requires knowing the factors that influence both its process and product. It contributes to the development of learners cognitive skills in attaining the required strategies in the learning process such as analysis, synthesis, inference, etc (Bacha, 2002).

Latif (2007) aimed to examine second language writing anxiety and writing self-efficacy in the context of English as a foreign language in Egypt. Participants were 67 Egyptian English language teaching students. The results indicated that second language anxiety was negatively associated the students' writing performance. According to Connor (1996: 59), current-traditional rhetoric benefited writing in three ways. First, ‘written products became a respectable object of academic enquiry’. Second, writing was no longer taught by part-time instructors or Teaching Assistants. Third, a number of journals were devoted to research in writing. All in all, current traditional rhetoric contributed to free writing from being a mere reinforcement of its sister skills; viz. writing has become an independent skill and has been practiced for its own sake. However, the product approach became a subject of criticism in 1980s. Krashen (1984:25). He maintains that if the student-writer is ‘able to master all the rules of punctuation, spelling, grammar, and style that linguists have discovered and described’, then their reward would be a Ph.D in Linguistics but they would never be competent in

writing. So owing to what was considered drawbacks in the product approach, the late 1970s witnessed a shift to the process approach. From the point of view of the advocates of the new approach, writing should be an 'explanatory and generative process whereby writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning' (Zamel, 1983:165).

According to Raimes (1983:216) 'composing means expressing ideas, conveying meaning; composing means thinking'. Obviously, then, the manipulation of linguistic structures would be considered the most peripheral aspect of writing. In fact, by preoccupying themselves with the formal aspects of writing, the students would do no more than 'lock themselves into a semantic and rhetorical prison' (ibid). Instead, the prime concern for classroom activities would, therefore, be generating preliminary ideas, doing prewriting activities, outlining, getting started, producing first drafts, editing, revising, etc. Nacira (2010) conducted a study in which he analyses some factors behind students poor writing productions at Batna University. He stated that "concerning the learners, the findings revealed that the majority of the teachers assume that the effects of L1, lack of reading, motivation, and practice result in students' poor performances in writing. They added that these difficulties occur at all levels the sentence, the paragraph, and the essay." Several research studies have indicated that international students studying in the Asian universities encounter challenges in coping with the writing demands in their disciplines Myles, J., & Cheng, L. (2003). Jafari& Ansari (2012) mention the Iranian EFL students failure in writing. He states that "the failure of Iranian EFL students in L2 writing as effectively as they should, canperhaps be attributed to a variety of factors including L2 writing instruction, lack of motivation, L2 writing feedback, lack of target language proficiency and vocabulary, the interference of L1 into L2 and psychological variables such as anxiety. "Salem (2007) explored the views of 50 male undergraduate students majoring in English in relation to writing in English at the University of Al- Azhar Egypt. Most of the students felt overwhelmed when they were required to write on a certain topic. They did not know how to start, how to develop their ideas or how to conclude the essay. They also lacked the technical skills of writing acceptable compositions in English. They often repeated their ideas, reported few if any valid points, made serious mistakes in grammar and punctuation, and included irrelevant information. Hourani remarks that the primary causes of errors can be as follows: "Interlingual errors and intralingual errors. Interlingual errors are those which are related to the native language whereas intralingual errors are those which are due to the language being learned." (2008:11). Russel and Spada (2006) stress that there is growing evidence that error correction is overall useful and can be helpful in L2 learning. Correction is essential in helping students become more accurate in using the foreign language.(Zhang:2009)A nonnative speaker is able to possess near native-like proficiency in the EFL context if he or she has plenty of time for learning English, adequate exposures to a wide variety of English both spoken and written, a real need to use English on a daily basis and interaction with more knowledgeable ones, not treating English as a subject to be learned, but as a means of communication, where the focus is on the meaning first, then on the form of the language .Almarwany (2008) confirms what Elkılıç states with regard to the punctuation problems. Almarwany (2008) states that students' first language causes many writing problems. Among these problems are capitalization and punctuation. According to Almarwany (2008), the results of the test revealed that the students committed various mistakes in grammar, organization, and, most importantly, in capitalization and punctuation (p. 10). Like Elkılıç, she pointed out that errors in punctuation were the most frequent. The findings indicated that errors in punctuation

resulted from inadequate mastery of L2 rules as well as Arabic interference. Due to inferior language proficiency, students apply L1 rules without realizing that L1 and L2 have different systems of punctuation. There are some punctuation marks commonly used in both Arabic and English, but such is not true all the time. Only if there is a similarity between L1 and L2 will this lead to a positive transfer. However, there are three arguments supporting the fact that the fate of writing is not always bound up with the fate of the other skills. First, people do not always use writing to reinforce activities pertaining to other skills being learned. In fact, there are a number of activities that can only be handled through the medium of writing. Viz. such activities as personal and official letters, books, newspapers, journals, etc could not be conceived as just a reflection of other skills in any direct sense. Nor can it be possible to argue that these skills are as capable as writing in handling these same communicative functions. Even in educational settings there are situations where students practice writing as an end in itself. Second, there are a variety of writing problems that cannot be overcome by learners' competence in the other skills. This could have otherwise been the case if writing had indeed been approached simply as 'homemaid' of the other skills. The writing literature shows that it is mostly through writing instruction, writing practice and teacher's feedback that students' writing can be improved (cf. Krashen, 1984). Third, writing autonomy can be shown by its role as a differentiating factor between literate and illiterate members of the relevant speech community. Regardless of the changing roles that writing has been assumed to play (cf. Raimes, 1987), a number of approaches have to date been proposed to provide guidelines for (successful) writing pedagogy. The relevant literature abounds in three such approaches that seem to have been most influential. These are the product approach, the process approach and the functional approach. As to the process approach, it is concerned with the finished text. Particularly, it is concerned with manipulation of lexical and grammatical structures in the written text. All writing forms characteristic of the oral and audio-lingual methods (technically known as controlled composition) are subsumed under this approach since they were concerned with the correct use of language structures. Of course, these forms of writing could not be expected to develop learners' composing abilities beyond the sentence level. What they did was either reinforce 'paradigms, grammatical exercises, dictation, translation from native to target language' (Rivers, 1981:293) or functioned as a reinforcement for oral habits (Silva, 1990:11). However, the 1960s witnessed a new development into the product approach that has come to be known in the literature as the 'current-traditional rhetoric'. This writing theory differs from its predecessor (i.e. controlled composition) in advocating writing at discourse level. It particularly emphasized the paragraph and its components (ibid, p. 14). (Shearon, 2001) In case of the Saudi students, most of the English language input they receive occurs inside the classroom. Effective teaching leads to improved student achievement. Great teachers have a huge effect on their students. They inspire their students to maximum effort and maximum accomplishment.

Definition of Terms

Writing: Peters (1986) defines writing as a "curiously solitary form of communication, addressed to an absent and often unknown reader" (p. 169). Grami (2010) commented that many researchers

(Widdowson, 1983; Smith, 1989; White, 1987) have defined writing as a 'complicated cognitive task' because of the fact that it "... demands careful thought, discipline, and concentration, and it is not just a simple direct production of what the brain knows or can do at a particular moment"

Zamel (1983) views the process of writing as non-linear, exploratory, and generative whereby writers discover and generate ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning. This process involves the sub-processes of planning, collecting data, drafting, revising, rewriting and editing. These sub-processes need not to be seen as sequential stages; they are rather highly dynamic, non-sequential, and interactive processes.

Writing problems: for the scope of this study the concept of writing problems refers to the situations when students have difficulties in one or more aspects of writing skill such as proper use of grammar, punctuation and spelling writing skills. When facing such problems students fail to produce a free mistakes piece of writing.

1-3 Purpose of the Study

This study aims to explore mainly the language problems made by English language students at King Khalid University when practicing writing: The general purpose of the study is to make balance between opportunities for students to engage in writing that is meaningful to them, and to receive main instruction in the skills and strategies they need to become proficient writers. Development of the self-regulation strategies and motivation needed for independent writing are also important.

1-4 Questions of the Study

This paper is aimed at investigating the following questions:

- 1-What are the most common types of writing problems among English language female students?
- 2-What are the reasons behind the most common types of writing problems among English language female students from their perspectives?
- 3-What are the suggestions to solve writing problems made by English language female students?

1-5 Instrument of the Study

This study was carried out in the College of ARTs, Sciences and Community at King Khalid University ... To achieve the purpose of the study two instruments were used :

- 1-Sample of students produced writing modules.
- 2- A questionnaire to be spread to the students.

Sample of the study

Sixty English language female students participated in this study.

1-6 Procedure of the Study

To answer the questions of the study and in corporation with the English teachers at the English department, 60 of the English language female students were asked to write around 200 words about two of the following topics: one (about yourself) start with “I was born”, the place you mostly like to visit, the moment your life changed forever and finally why you can succeed in your life, another about the cultural food in Saudi Arabia. The researchers analyzed and scored the students written products. To answer the second question of the study the students were asked to answer a questionnaire about the reasons behind the most common types of writing problems from their own perspectives. To answer the third question of the study the student were asked to suggest remedies to overcome writing problems they face when they write.

Statistical Analysis

The study used the descriptive statistics namely p percentages of the samples' responses regarding the items on the questionnaire. The sample of the students were manually checked and scored.

1-7 Results, Discussion and Application

This analyzing the data related to the three research questions:

1-What are the most common types of writing problems among English language female students?

2- What are the reasons behind the most common types of writing problems among English language female students from their perspectives?

3- What are the suggestions to solve writing problems made by English language female students?

1-8 Grammatical and punctuation errors

Sixty-third-level students who study English language at the University of King Kkalid participated in this study. They were all enrolled in a writing course designed for third level in the academic year 2016- 2017. The students were asked to write an essay of 200 -250 words about two suggested topics. The researchers scored and analyzed the written data. The results of analyzing the most common grammatical errors and punctuation errors in the students 'written data are: errors in the use of tenses, in the use of prepositions, syntactical errors, the subject-verb agreement, errors in the use of articles errors.

1-9 Classification of Grammatical Errors:

A total of 401 grammatical errors were found. Table 1 shows that the most common grammatical errors were as follows: Tenses (30%), Prepositions (15%), syntactical errors (20.5%) subject- verb agreement (20%) and the use of the articles' (15%). Table 1 stated for that the most common grammatical errors are in the students' module writing. See table 1 for details.

Table 1. Grammatical Errors

Types of Errors	Number of Errors	Percentage of Errors
Tenses	104	30%
Prepositions	34	15%
Syntactical errors	66	20%
Subject – verb agreement ,	100	20%
Articles	54	15%
Total	358	100%

1.10 Spelling error, and sentence formation

The errors which the participants made in the use of tenses amounted to 118 errors- 33% of the total grammatical errors. See table 2 for details.

Table 2. Spelling error

Types of Errors	Number of Errors	Percentage of Errors
Present progressive instead of present simple	37	33%
Simple present instead of present perfect	32	32.6%
Simple past instead of present perfect	19	15.%
Simple past instead of simple present	30	19. %
Total	118	100%

The results of the analysis of the grammatical errors shown in table 1 reveal that the most common grammatical errors were in the use of the correct tense 118 errors making 33% of the total. In details, 37% of the students used present progressive instead of present simple. 32% of the students used simple present instead of present perfect. whereas 19% of the students used simple past instead of simple present. Finally 30% of them used simple past instead of present perfect This may be due to L1 interference, as compared to English, which has the simple and continuous forms. Moreover, Arabic language does not make the distinction between actions completed in the past with and without a connection to the present. So Arabic students have problems with the present perfect tense, as in *I finished my pocking . Can you check it?*.

1-11 Errors in the Use of Prepositions

The errors which the participants made in the use of prepositions amounted to 34 errors- 9.6% of the total grammatical errors. See table 3 for details:

Table 3. Errors in the Use of Prepositions

Type of errors	Number of errors	Percentage of error
Omission of preposition	18	60%
Addition of preposition	9	19.6%
Misuse of preposition	10	20.4%
Total	34	100%

Omission of preposition is a large area of suspicion for students, 60% of the students fail to practice it correctly. at the same time 19.6% of the students misuse the correct preposition. Finally 20.4% of the students add a preposition where it is not needed. Arab students face a real problem with using incorrect prepositions when they write compositions in English because of the quite difference in using prepositions in both languages. On student wrote (Wait me) instead of (Wait for me), that's because in the Arabic language there is no preposition after the verb (wait). Arab students as EFL learners usually try to relate the use of English prepositions to their mother tongue (MT) prepositional system. In many instances, the difference in the number of prepositions and the lack of a one to one mapping between the English and the MT prepositions is the source of the difficulty. In addition to this, since prepositional usage in English can be highly idiomatic (especially in preposition verbs and phrasal verbs), the nuances of idiomatic usage of English prepositions are highly challenging to EFL learners and even native speakers are sometimes unsure of the correct form (Gass S, 1983: 161).

1-12 Syntactical Errors

The syntactical errors which the participants made amounted to 66 errors- 20.2% of the total grammatical errors. See table 4 for details:

Table 4. Syntactical Errors

Types of errors	Number of errors	Percentage of errors
Omission of plural ending 's'	12	19. 2%

Misuse and addition of the plural ending 's'	10	14.1%
Misuse of possessive 's'	12	20.1%
Incorrect use of comparative adjectives	8	14.1%
Wrong word form	20	32.4%
Total	70	99.9%

Wrong word form error is an error done by 32.4% of the students .another tricky area for students to learn is the omission of plural ending 's'.19.2% of the students show deficiency in this area .20.1%of the students fail to use the possessive 's' correctly .14.1% of the students misuse the plural ending 's' incorrect use of comparative adjectives is also tricky for 14.1% of the students. Research on second language acquisition has long acknowledged the important role of Interference as it has a negative influence of the mother language (L1) on the learners' performance of the target language (L2). This influence results in language transfer. According to Oldin (1989), "Transfer is the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously acquired; the transfer of Arabic structures in the English students 'writing has produced a number of errors on the grammatical, lexical, semantic, and syntactic levels.

1-13 Verb Agreement

The errors which the participants made in the subject-verb Agreement amounted to 100 errors- 28% of the total grammatical errors. See table 5 for details.

Table 5 .Subject-Verb Agreement

Types of errors	Number of errors	Percentage of errors
plural subject verb	50	60%
singular subject verb	30	25%
Indefinite Pronouns	20	15%
Total	100	100%

One of the most common type of error made by students in the study group is verb agreement. In this case the subject and the verb phrase in the English sentence should agree in number and person. This was the area with a big sampling with a total of 100 attempts. The big amount of errors could be a strong indicator that the students lack a basic understanding of subject-verb agreement. In Arabic, the subject must agree with the verb that follows, that is to say if the subject is masculine, the verb should respond to it and the same applies to the feminine. A possible explanation why students tend to add -s after plural, and omit -s after singular may due to overgeneralization of the rule. Students over generalize the plural by adding the plural -s to the verb that follows and omit the -s in the verb if the subject is singular. Most Arab students confuse between the third person singular (-s) and the plural (-s). They tend to add --s to the verb if the subject is plural and omit -s if the subject is singular Mori, Y. (1998).

1-14 Articles

The errors which the participants made in the use of articles amounted to 54 errors- 15% of the total grammatical errors. See table 6 for details.

Table 6

Error source	Number of Errors	Percentage of Errors
Omission	20	40%
Addition	21	40%
Substitution	13	20%
total	54	100%

40% of the students omitted the articles when they have to be used. Substitute of the right article with the wrong one is made by 20% of the students. 40% of the students add an article where it is not needed. While the Arabic system manifests a binary distinction between the defined and the undefined, the English system exhibits a tripartite distinction. The Arabic language system of the definite and indefinite articles might have a negative effect on the students' wrong use of these articles in the target language (English) Hourani (2008). AbiSamara (2003) investigates the reason behind the students' misuse of the articles. He found that most of the errors were traced to L1 interference (interlingual errors). This implies that the article system of the L1 (Arabic) is transferred negatively into the target language. This is in line with Mizuno (1999).

1-15 Spelling mistakes

Al- Karaki (2005) attributed the spelling errors that she identified into six causes. According to her the main causes of spelling errors of ALE are pronunciation, differences between the sound systems of English and Arabic, overgeneralization, arbitrary nature of English word derivation, incomplete application of English spelling rules, or the lack of knowledge of the exceptions of spelling rules, and performance errors. Spelling Students need to understand that spelling mistakes do not usually prevent the reader from understanding what the writer is trying to say, but they can create a negative impression. For this reason it is advisable to try to remove them from important pieces of writing.

Table 7. Spelling Errors

Causing spelling error from the viewpoint of the students:	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly agree	Agree
1. difference between written and spoken English.				100%	
2. The origin of English words.	94%	4%	2%		
3. The phonological differences between Arabic and English.		2%	2%	96%	
4. The better speller - better reader.					98%
5. Textbooks help in developing spelling proficiency.	92%	4%	2%	2%	2%
6. lack of materials.		7%	3%	88%	1%

7. lack of interest to learn.	95%	5%
8. lack of good teachers.		100%

All students agree that the difference between the written and spoken English and the lack of good teachers are among the main reasons behind their spelling errors. 98% of the students believe that they will be better speller if they become better readers. phonological differences between Arabic and English is consider a serious cause for spelling errors by 96% of the students. 95% of the students see developing interest to learn spelling as important factor to master it .The origin of the English words as a cause of spelling weaknesses is regarded by 94% of the students . The role of the textbooks in enhancing the students' spelling competence is emphasized by 92% of the students. 88% of the students say that they are weak in spelling because of the lack of extra material. See table 7.

Question 2

In order to answer the second question of this paper, students were asked to answer a questionnaire for knowing how students learn English grammar and the reasons behind the most common types of writing problems spread among them.

Following tables illustrate percentages of the students' answers. (See appendix A).

Table 8. Grammatical Errors

Causing grammar error from the viewpoint of the students:	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly agree	Agree
1. learning grammar through a context.	92.5%	3%	4.5%		
2. Master the grammatical concepts under study.		3%	2%		95%
3. Using Arabic to facilitate grammar learning.				98%	2.%
4. focusing should be on the accuracy of production.	87%	7%	2%	3%	1%
5. learning grammar along with other language skills.	90%	7%			3%
6. Grammar is taught in isolation				2.5%	97.5%
7. Practicing the new grammar a lot.	93%				7%

When being asked about how they learn English, a majority of the students 95.5 % of them strongly agreed that they don't learn grammar items through a context .98 % of the students say that their teachers use Arabic to simplify the rules and facilitate grammar learning. 87% of them reported that they should focus on the correctness or the accuracy of the grammar production.. 90 % of the students said that they learn grammar along with other language skills. 97.5% agreed on the fact Grammar is taught in isolation and instruction focuses on rote rules and memorization. 94 % of the students claimed form-focused grammar instruction is the core teaching strategy of grammar instruction in Saudi EFL classes. 93% of the students strongly agree that they don't practice the new grammar a lot. See table 7.

Question 3

The third question of this is how students suggest the solution of writing problems which face them when they write. In order to obtain these suggestions about how to overcome writing problems, the researcher conducted an interview and spread a piece of paper to each student with three questions to encourage them to participate in the study. (See Appendix B)

Student suggested as follows:

1-To solve grammar problems'

1. Teaching grammatical concepts should be within a context.
2. Arabic should not be used to simplify the English grammar rules
3. Focus should be on the fluency not just the correctness or accuracy of production.
4. Grammar rules should be taught incorporating with other language skills.

To solve punctuation problems'

- Punctuation marks should be introduced within a context.
- Teachers should help students to recognize the similarity and the differences between the Arabic punctuation system and the English one.
- Teachers should help students develop interest toward the use of the punctuation marks.
- Teachers should check the use of the punctuation marks continuously.

To solve spelling problems'

Teachers be trained enough to help students overcome spelling deficiency.

Teachers should draw students' attention to:

- The difference between written and spoken English.
- To the fact that the origin of English words makes learning their spelling difficult.
- Teachers be trained enough to help students overcome spelling deficiency.

Summary

The analysis of the results: find that the student's committed several kinds of errors in: grammar, punctuation and spelling. The data obtained from the students' module writing showed that students suffer serious deficit in applying the punctuation system correctly in writing such as:

No use for the full stops at the end of a sentence.

No enough spaces between words.

Hardly using question marks, hyphens, semicolon, Exclamation mark, missing comma after introductory elements and colon.

The absence of the upper case at the beginning of the new sentences.

Capitalizing for proper nouns.

The analysis of through spelling mistakes reveal that these mistakes fall in one of the following categories :

1. Substitution, Omission and Addition

According to the students, the most common factors that affect students English writings that their teacher use Arabic to simplify the rules and facilitate grammar learning beside the fact that grammar is taught in isolation and instruction focuses on rules. Learning grammar away from other language skills, the focusing of the grammar instruction on grammar form and the limited practice of the new grammar as affecting factors over their poor grammar learning.

Concerning the ways of how students learn punctuation 38 students agree that differences between Arabic punctuation systems affect their learning of English. Students also mention that their teachers fail to improve their use of the punctuation and don't check the correct use of the punctuation marks, they don't teach the punctuation

marks through a context, sometimes forget to use the punctuation marks and don't inspire students to be more sensitive infusing the punctuation marks.

Spelling is a major challenge for all students to defeat. When exploring about how students learn spelling, all of them agree that the difference between the written and spoken English and the lack of good teachers are among the main reasons behind their spelling errors. Students also believe that they will be better speller if they become better readers. Not learning the phonological differences between Arabic and English is considering a serious cause for spelling errors from the students point of view. Students also see developing interest to learn spelling, the origin of the English words, the rules of writing all these enhance the students' to overcome writing difficulties.

Conclusion

As a practical activity, language teaching is assumed to 'draw on insights from many disciplines' (Brumfit and Johnson, 1979). Linguistics has been a major discipline to fuel classroom activities. Where writing is concerned, it was once practiced as 'sentences in isolation', Widdowson's (1979). The second half of the 20th century witnessed new developments into the linguistic theory whereby the 'text' has come to be viewed as the basic unit of language. Once again writing pedagogy has been greatly influenced in that classroom activities have focused on the paragraph as a unit of writing. Examination of the writing syllabus of some Arab universities has shown that writing practice assumes a bottom-up approach, emphasizing the sentence and its constituents at the expense of the skills needed to write coherent paragraphs. Thus, since the sentence and the paragraph are two different levels of linguistic representation, the current writing syllabus cannot be expected to improve learners composing skills at textual level.

As mentioned earlier, this paper aimed to explore mainly the writing problems made by English language female students at King Khalid University ..College of ARTs, Sciences and community. when practicing writing. The results of the study indicate that the students faced the following problems in writing: grammatical problems, punctuation problems and spelling problems.

Recommendations

Writing involves altering many things at the same time: grammar, spelling, letter formation, vocabulary, punctuation, capitalization, content, and following the directions of educators. All of these skills must be automatic for writing to be effective. As a student progresses through universities, the challenges relating to writing students should involve in story writing, editing, research, note-taking, text/exam writing, etc. All of these tasks require planning and time and it's recommended that:

- Additional time for writing assignments
- Identifying and Addressing Difficulties in Handwriting
- Encourage the student to elaborate on which ideas need to be included in the assignment within the organizational model
- Begin writing first/rough draft from the model
- Increasing the number of assignments.
- Well defined essay writing rules (sentence, paragraph, introduction, conclusion, transition words, etc...),
- Students' samples should be checked and distributed back to them for correction and analysis.
- helping students to overcome writing anxiety.
- Clear instructions and sufficient guidance about how to perform the writing task.
- personalizing and simplify and more interesting and relevant topics (real life situation).

- draw their students' attention to the fact that good writers are basically good readers.
- Edit for vocabulary usage, sentencing, grammatical constructions, mechanics of writing (spelling, capitals, punctuation, paragraphing)

Suggestions for addressing writing difficulties

* Begin with a brainstorming stage where ideas about the subject are written down. Help the student organize their ideas from the brainstorming to an organizational model (i.e. a story map, a timeline, an outline, organizational software such as Inspiration, Spark-Space)

- Marks for spelling only deducted when spelling is an essential skill requirement for the task
- For students who cannot keep up with note taking from a blackboard, provide a copy or outline
- Work in small time periods rather than spending hours at a time.

References

- Al-Hazmi, S. (2006). Writing Reflection: Perceptions of Arab EFL Learners. *South Asian Language Review*, XVI (2),36-52
- Al-Hazmi, S. And P. Schofield (2007). Enforced Revision with Checklist and Peer Feedback in EFL Writing: The Example of Saudi University Students. *Scientific Journal of King Faisal University (Humanities and Management Sciences)*, 8 (2), 237-267
- Al-Khuweileh, A. A. and A. Al-Shoumali (2000). Writing Errors: A study of the Writing Ability of Arab Learners of Academic English and Arabic at University [Abstract]. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 13 (2), 174-183.[Online] Available: <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content>
- Al-Jamhour, A. (2001). A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Written Discourse of Arabic- Speaking Learners of English. *Journal of King Saud University (Language and Translation)*, 13(1), 25-44.
- Allwright, R. (1979). Language Learning Through Communicative Practice. In C. I. Brumfit and K. Johnson (Eds.), *The Communicative Approach to Language Teaching*, (pp. 167-181). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brandt, J. (1986). Text and Context: How Writers Come to Mean. In B. Couture (Ed.), *Functional Approaches to Writing: Research Perspective*, (pp. 93-107). London: Frances Printer Connor, U. (1996). *Contrastive Rhetoric: Cross Cultural Aspects of Second Language Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Daoud, S. A. (1998). How to Motivate EFL Learning and Teaching of Academic Writing by Cross-Cultural Exchanges. *English for Specific Purposes*, 17 (4), 391-412.
- Fitze, M. and R. Glasgow (n.d.). Input Enhancement and Tense Formation in Arab EFL Writing. Retrieved from http://www.tesoljournal.com/Articles/Example_Article.doc.
- Freedman, A., I. Pringle, Y. Yalden (Eds.) (1983). *Learning to Write: First Language/Second Language*, (pp.179-189). New York: Longman.
- Hymes, D. (1979). On Communicative Competence. In C. I. Brumfit and K. Johnson. (Eds.), *The Communicative Approach to Language Teaching*, (pp. 5- 26). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Abisamra, N. (2003). *An analysis of error in Arabic speakers' English writings*. American University of Beirut. Retrieved July20, 2014, from <http://abisamra03tripod.com/nada/languageacq-erroranalysis.html>.
- Albalawi, S. (2014). *Using media to teach grammar in context and UNESCO values: A case study of two English teachers and two students for Saudi Arabia* (Unpublished master's thesis). Eastern Washington University, Cheney, Washington.
- Al-Buainain, Haifa.(2010) *Students' Writing errors in ESL: A Case Study*. Department of Foreign Languages. Qatar University
- Al-Khasawneh, Fadi and Huwari, Ibrahim (2012) *The Reasons behind the Weaknesses of Writing in English among Pre-year Students' at Taibah University*.
- Almarwany, M. (2008). *Writing difficulties of EFL secondary school students in Almunawwarh*. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Taibah University, Almunawwarh.
- Al-Musharraf, A. (2007). *Teaching and assessing grammar in English primary stage classrooms that promote communicative language* (Unpublished master's thesis). Imam University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
- Alnufaie, M., & Grenfell, M. (2012). *EFL students' writing strategies in Saudi Arabian ESP writing classes: Perspectives on learning strategies in self-access language learning*. *Studies in Self-Access*

- Learning Journal*, 3(4), 407-422.
- Alqahtani, S. (2009). *The role of using reading stories techniques on teaching English vocabulary for EFL learners (elementary stage) in Saudi Arabia* (Unpublished master's thesis). Imam University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
- Alsamaani, A. (2014). *Evaluating classroom assessment techniques of novice Saudi EFL teachers*. *Journal of Arabic and Human Sciences*, 7(2), 63-81.
- Al-Zahrani, M. (2011). *The effectiveness of keyword-based instruction in enhancing English vocabulary achievement and retention of intermediate stage pupils with different working memories capacities* (Unpublished master's thesis). Taif University, Taif, Saudi Arabia.
- Ansari, A., A. (2012). *Teaching of English to Arab students: Problems and remedies*. K. (Ed.), Academic Press Inc. Alam: Penerbit Fajar Bakti Sdn. Bhd.
- Assalahi, H. (2013). *Why is the grammar-translation method still alive in the Arab world? Teachers' beliefs and its implications for EFL teacher education*. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 3(4), 589-599.
- Bacha, N. N. (2002). *Developing learners' academic writing skills in higher education: A study for educational reform*. *Language and Education*, 16(3), 163-173.
- Bacha, N. N. (2002). *Developing learners' academic writing skills in higher education: A study for educational reform*. *Language and Education*, 16(3), 163-173.
- Bahloul, M. (2007). Spelling errors of Arab learners: Evidence of intergraphic.
- Brown, H. D. 2001. **Teaching by Principle: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy**. New York: Addison-Wesley Longman. Cambridge University Press.
- Chitravelu, N., Sithamparam, S. & Teh Soo Choon (2005). *ELT Methodology: Principles and practice*. Shah Curriculum: A Comparative Study in a Saudi Context. Doctoral dissertation submitted to Newcastle David N. Shearon 2001 Teachers Dubai – UA2E. June.
- Ellis, R. (1985). *Second Language Acquisition*, Oxford University Press. *Educational Research*, 3(6), 519-524. Retrieved from:
- Ellis, R. (1997). *Second Language Acquisition*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Emmons, R.H., *An Effective Writing Formula for Unsure Writers*. <http://www.airpower.au.af.mil/airchronicles/aureview/1975/sept-,oct/emmons.html>. Retrieved on 15 May 2005.
- Dilshad, Ali. (2013). *Areas of Improvement in Classroom Teaching: A Professional Development Plan for Business Communication*. *English for Specific Purposes World*, ISSN 1682-3257, <http://www.esp-world.info>, Issue 38, vol. 14, 2013
- Gass, S., and L. Selinker. 1983. *Language Transfer in Language Learning*. Issues in Second Language Research MA:
- Grami, G. M. A. (2010). *The effects of integrating peer feedback into university-level ESL writing curriculum: a comparative study in a Saudi context* GMA Grami - 2010 - theses.ncl.ac.uk
- Henderson, L. (1981). *Orthography and word recognition in reading*. London: Academic Press.
- Hildreth, G. (1962). *Teaching spelling: a guide to basic principles and practices*. New
- Hourani, T. M. (2008). *An Analysis of the Common Grammatical Errors in the English Writing Made by 3rd Secondary Male Students in the Eastern Coast of the UAE*, Dissertation, Institute of Education, British University in Dubai.
<http://interesjournal.org/ER/pdf/2012/June/Ansari.pdf>.
- Hyland, K. (2008). *Writing theories and writing pedagogies*. *Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching*, 4(2), 91-110.
- [Kamal, Mourtaga](http://www.amazon.com). (2016). *Investigating writing problems among Palestinian students studying English as a foreign language*. www.amazon.com
- Jun, Z. (2008). *A comprehensive review of studies on second language writing*. *Papers in Applied Language Studies*, 12, 89-123.
- Krashen, S., (1985). *The Input Hypothesis: Issues and Implications*, Longman, London and New York.
- Latif, M. A. (2007). *The factors accounting for the Egyptian EFL university students' negative writing affect*. *Essex Graduate Students Papers in Language and Linguistics*. 9, 57-82. mapping. In C. Coombe & L. Barlow (Eds). *Language Teacher Research in*
- Mel, Levine. (2002). *Difficulties with Writing* www.pbs.org/wgbh/misunderstoodminds/writingdiffs
- Mizuno, M. (1999). *Interlanguage analysis of the English article system: Some cognitive constraints facing the Japanese adult learners*. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, 37, 127-153.
- Mo, Haiwen (2012) *A Study of the Teaching of ESL Writing in Colleges in China* Associate Professor, Applied Linguistics. School of Foreign Languages, Guangxi Teachers Education University Minxiudong Road 175, Nanning 530001, Guangxi, China



- Mori, Y. (1998). *Effects of First Language and Phonological Accessibility on Kanji* *onlinelibrary.wiley.com* > ... > Vol 82 Issue 1
- Myles, J., & Cheng, L. (2003). *The social and cultural life of non-native English speaking international graduate students at a Canadian university*. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 2(3), 247-263. Retrieved 3rd March, 2012, from [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S1475-1585\(03\)00028-6](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S1475-1585(03)00028-6)
- Nacira, Ghodbae .(2010) *Identification and Analysis of Some Factors Behind Students 'Poor Writing Productions the Case Study of 3rd Year Students at the Department –Batana University-* Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment for the Requirements of the Master Degree in Applied Linguistics and Foreign Language Teaching. Newbury House Publishers, Inc. page 161.
- Nofal, Khalil .(2010). *The Reasons Behind the English Major Students' Weaknesses in Philadelphia University* . Head / Department of English. Philadelphia University – Jordan.
- Nunan, D. (1999). *Second Language Teaching and Learning*. USA: Heinle&Heinle Publishers. of Oral Fluency. *English Language Teaching*
- Oxford, R., & Scarcella, C. (1994). *Second language vocabulary learning among adults: State of the art in vocabulary instruction*. *System*, 22(2), 231-243.
- Özge,Razı, (1012) *An Investigation into the Met cognitive Writing Strategies of Turkish Cypriot University Students*. *International Journal of English Linguistics* Vol. 2, No. 1; February 2012 ISSN 1923-869X E-ISSN 1923-8703 118
- Pakir. (1999). *Language as a Globalizing World*. *TESOL Quarterly*, 199933(1), 103–114.
- Peters, P. (1986). *Getting the Theme Across: A Study of Dominant Function in the Academic Writing of University Students*. In B. Couture (Ed.), *Functional Approaches to Writing: Research Perspectives* (pp. 169-185). London: Frances Printer. Recognition. *The Modern Language Journal*, 82(1), 69-82.
- Russel, J., & Spada, N. (2006). *The Effectiveness of Corrective Feedback for the Acquisition of L2 Grammar*. In Norris and Ortega (2006) (Ed.) *Synthesizing Research on Language Learning and Teaching*, Hawi: John Benjamins.
- Salem, M. S. A. S. (2007). *The effect of journal writing on written performance, writing apprehension, and attitudes of Egyptian English majors*. Ph.D Dissertation, The Pennsylvania State University. Retrieved from: Shoebottom's . (2016) .Understanding writing mistakes . esl.fis.edu/learners/advice/mistakes
- Smith, B. (2008). Arabic speakers. In M. Swan & B. Smith (Eds.), *Learner English: A teacher's guide to interference and other problems* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: *The Middle East*, (pp. 41-51). Mattoon, Ill: United Graphics, Inc.
- Ibrahim FathiHuwari and Fadi Maher Al-Khasawneh (2012). *The Reasons behind the Weaknesses of Writing in English among Pre-year Students' at Taibah University University*, School of Education, Communication and Language Sciences. Retrieved from Unpublished doctoral dissertation. York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.
- Zamel, V. (1983). *The composing processes of advanced ESL students: Six case studies*. *TESOL Quarterly*, 17, 165-187.
- Zhang, Shumei .(2009). *The Role of Input, Interaction and Output in the Development*.