

Academic Writing Teaching Method for Arab Students: A Case Study in a Health Sciences University in the U.A.E

Omnia Ibrahim (Corresponding author)

Department of General Education, Rak Medical and Health Sciences University, United Arab Emirates

Faculty of Languages and Translation, Sadat Academy for Management Sciences, Cairo, Egypt

Email: omnia@rakmhsu.ac.ae

Received: 06/01/2021

Accepted: 28/02/2021

Published: 01/05/2021

Volume: 2 Issue: 3

How to cite this paper: Ibrahim, O. (2021). Academic Writing Teaching Method for Arab Students: A Case Study in a Health Sciences University in the U.A.E. *Journal of Critical Studies in Language and Literature*, 2(3), 8-19

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46809/jcsll.v2i3.63>

Copyright © 2020 by author(s) and Global Talent Academy Ltd. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Abstract

This study examines the difficulties faced by Arab students in the tertiary level in creating a well-written paragraph in English academic writing. The participants were approximately 40 students from RAK Medical and Health Sciences University located in Ras Al Khaimah in The United Arab Emirates. The study's significance is to propose potential methods and solutions for academic English instructors to improve the students' performance by designing a writing course based on the pre-and post-tests that were used to monitor students' progress in writing before and after the course of Academic writing. Pre-tests were conducted to analyze the needs of the students. The analyses revealed that the participants had trouble using the writing fundamentals like grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure. After implementing the course topics, the results of the post-tests showed changes in the students' academic writing performance. The study concludes that to obtain the best results from the courses of English Academic writing, the course should be based on the difficulties faced by the students. It also shows that before applying any academic writing course, the instructor has to carry out an error or needs analyses to identify the weak points of the group, then the course can be designed accordingly.

Keywords: Academic Writing, Arab Students, ESL, EFL, Needs/Error Analyses.

1. Introduction

Writing is a form of human communication. It is the visual form of the language (Rahmawati, 2017). A writing process consists of planning, production, editing and revision as well as the integration of content and the coordination of the whole writing. (Kelly & Melor, 2016) Writers need to be skilled in phrasing and have a wide variety of vocabulary (Sulaiman, 2017).

Academic writing is one of the most important skills that needs to be developed over a long period. Writing skill is an essential component in mastering English because it incorporates all the elements of English (Zakaria & Abdul Aziz, 2019). Anita (2016) emphasizes that the elements of writing, namely vocabulary, grammar, material, mechanics, organization and design, need to be proficient in a writer. Hapsari and Sukavatee (2018) also stated that some elements such as composition, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics are needed for writing skills.

Proficiency of academic English writing remains a major challenge for many Arab students. It is vital for students to master the English language and to be able to study other disciplines where English is the medium of education. It is also a method for studying languages and for evaluating the competence of learners in a language (McDonough & Crawford, 2018).

English language writing has been a challenge at the tertiary level, especially for students of English as a second language as Arabs. In their writing abilities, Arab students seem weaker than other skills. Most of the studies published in the context of writing English as a second language indicate that students learning English at the tertiary level face difficulties in English in general and writing skills in particular (Tahaine, 2010). Al Badi (2015) considers academic writing to be one of the greatest obstacles for ESL students. Likewise, Ansari (2012) echoes the same idea when he states that writing is perceived to be the most difficult of the four English language skills.

Even though some students may have been learning English for years, writing is still a difficult skill to learn and master. Several researchers note that ESL undergraduate students are struggling to fulfill the requirements of English academic writing in their literature and language courses. University students do not only lack the required English language proficiency, but also knowledge of academic writing, which hinders their academic progress (Ansari, 2012). Barry (2014) and Nuruzzaman, Islam, & Shuchi (2018) reported that ESL writing revealed students facing numerous challenges in English writing. Yet, other researchers believe that writing skills are really a challenge, but it will not hinder higher education progress. It can be acquired and it can develop within the tertiary level (Ibrahim, 2020). Mallia (2015) also stated that despite its increasing importance, mastery of academic English remains a substantial challenge among numerous learners of Arab heritage, one that is complex and multifactorial.

Long time ago researchers suggested that there are variables that influence the learning process of students. Communication apprehension, writing anxiety, fear of making an error are correlated with the students' writing weakness (Horwitz, 1986). Researches have shown not only the value of academic writing, but also they have shown that writing is a complex process. Musa (2010) discussed why students have difficulty in writing, and suggested: a) adequate understanding of sentence structure and punctuation, b) detailed grammar comprehension, c) organizational skills to write the subject phrases and supports, and d) enough vocabulary. The results showed that the students made a variety of mistakes, which were graded into syntactic, morphological, lexical, grammatical, phonological, and punctuation inaccuracies. The importance of grammar and its fundamentals is very essential in the writing process. Yee and Kee (2017) mentioned that a writer needs to create and manage ideas before translating them into readable texts, while at the same time ensuring that spelling, punctuation, grammar and others are correct.

Therefore, it is the duty of the instructor to implement or create more effective and functional methods and strategies that not only enable students to write efficiently, but also enhance their general knowledge of English. Few studies examined students' progress in writing after intensive focus on students' writing deficiencies.

The participants of this study were approximately 40 students from RAK Medical and Health Sciences University, located in the United Arab Emirates. The study put in consideration the needs of the students in the design of the course syllabus. This research is therefore an attempt to examine the writing deficiencies of students and aims at designing the course syllabus according to what the students need in writing. By doing so, the researcher anticipates that the results will suggest solutions to the difficulties of academic writing. The study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the obstacles that Arabs students face in academic writing?
2. What was the students' Academic writing performance level in the pre-tests, before the structured course syllabus was implemented?
3. In the error analyses, what were the major points of weakness (errors) that were common in most of the pre-test papers?
4. What was the students' Academic writing performance level in the post-tests, after the structured course syllabus was implemented?
5. What is the effect of designing a course based on the needs and errors of students in writing with regard to specific components of writing?

From the above questions, the study endeavors to solve a problem facing Arab students, which is writing in English a well-structured sentence, paragraph and essay. It is an attempt to implement a syllabus that is affective and that targets the main problems that Arabs face through the analysis of their writing progress before and after the implementation of the syllabus. The suggested syllabus is not a custom syllabus to be generalized to all Arab students, as a matter of fact, it is a recommendation that any ESL group has to be evaluated and analyzed first then a syllabus is tailored accordingly.

2. Literature Review

Several researchers have examined the academic writing difficulties faced by second or foreign language students in academic writing. These studies show that ESL/EFL writing is one of the most difficult courses that students face in their studies as they begin a new phase of literacy practice. Although Ansari (2012) conducted a research that showed that researches on second language writing are deficit on the elements of writing deficiency and how to develop the writing of students, yet, there are some valuable researches worth mentioning in this aspect.

Some researchers believed that students' native language affects their academic writing performance, as students tend to translate their thoughts into their native language, which is Arabic in this study. They transfer their thoughts from Arabic to

English. That is why most of them have a problem with sentence structure whose structure in Arabic is totally different than its structure in English. As Mallia (2015) states “ Challenges for writing in English may, for example, include the negative transfer associated with the rhetoric from one’s own culture.”

Salem (2007) analyzed the writing of 50 students in English at the ESL/EFL undergraduate level. The researcher also examined the relationship between Arabic-language, the students’ first-language, (L1) and English-language (L2) in their writing output. The study revealed that most of the students’ errors in writing were related to rhetorical techniques, vocabulary, cultural understanding, and idiom use.

Terraschke & Wahid (2011) reported that (L2) students face problems in writing and that these problems are limited to grammar, mechanics, sentence structure and appropriate vocabulary. This study proposed methods that would help students develop their writing skills, as well as suggestions for writing teachers to address the needs of their students in the design of their writing curriculum.

In addition, Frodesen (2009) stated that the difficulties faced by (L2) in their writing skills were syntactic, lexicogrammatical accuracy, and writing mechanics. According to the researcher, the study participants worked hard to develop their writing deficiencies. Often they rely on their (L1) to write in (L2) particularly to generate ideas and convey meaning. He concluded that (L2) writing teacher plays an important role in improving (L2) writing skills, increasing their vocabulary size and enhancing their syntactic complexity.

Mallia (2015) stated that writing features that need to be addressed in writing courses for trainers, teachers, translators or learners should also include aspects related to: (i) reader-writer responsibility as expectations vary across different cultures; (ii) the learners’ developmental stage as this influences the written output; (iii) rhetoric and text features and how they relate to specific genres, and (iv) aspects of positive and negative transfer from the learners own discourse community. Teacher-training and teaching courses adopting these principles were already successful among English writing learners and practitioners of Arab-heritage.

On the other hand, Hourani (2008) studied common forms of grammatical errors in the writing of EFL students. Results showed that the most common grammatical errors were prepositions, subject-verb agreement, articles, and verb tense. Likewise, Huwari and Al-Khasawneh (2013) discussed the causes of EFL writing errors. The study revealed that the reasons for students’ difficulty in writing were their lack of knowledge of grammar and comprehension of the meaning of English vocabulary. In addition, those students did not practice writing and did not have sufficient courses in writing until they reached the tertiary level.

Hirano (2014) studied the difficulties faced by refugee ESL students with academic writing and the tools they used to address their challenges at one of the largest universities in the United States. The researcher obtained data from seven participants from four different countries using examples of their writing in different courses in which they were enrolled. The researcher concluded that students could overcome their writing difficulties by participating in a special ESL writing course as well as using the assistance of the writing center and receiving feedback on their essays. She also indicated that, in order to help refugee ESL students resolve their writing difficulties, they should be enrolled in a writing course where the content of that course is tailored to their needs.

Similarly, Zuhour and Fatima (2015) conducted a research in Tabuk University department of English and Translation to examine the common types of errors of 40 female EFL students. Study findings revealed that grammatical tenses, use of articles, prepositions, spelling, capitalization, subject-verb agreement and punctuation were the most common errors. The research, however, stated that the data had been gathered from a small sample and from students with different levels of English, so the results could not be generalized to all ESL/EFL environments.

Sawalmeh (2013) evaluated 32 errors in trials conducted by 32 EFL students in the Ha’il University Preparatory Year. The findings showed that students made many written mistakes. Those mistakes included: (a) the capitalization, (b) spelling, (c) word order, (d) tense, (f) single and plural forms, (g) the sentence fragments, (h) the articles, (i) the subject-verb agreement and (j) prepositions

Mallia (2015) conducted a study to explore underlying causes behind the underperformance of Arab learners’ writing output, and suggested possible strategies and solutions for teachers and instructors of academic writing in English. He stated that focus on surface-level writing errors at the expense of written discourse and genre analysis may be one of the key causes. Additionally, insufficient training of teachers may be a substantial underlying factor, with emphasis being given to product- and process-writing.

Zakaria & Abdul Aziz (2019) stated that by integrating technology in the learning process, students would be able to improve their writing skill. This research aimed to know the impact of Digital Storytelling (DS) on students by investigating its impact on content, grammar, vocabulary and overall performance. This study involved 52 students, who were chosen using convenient sampling as part of the controlled and experimental groups. Data was collected from pre and post-tests. The quantitative data were analyzed and findings showed that there is a significant difference in the score before and after the intervention, but there is no significant difference between the score of the experimental group and the controlled group. Yet, participants stated that Digital story telling motivated them to write and improve their writing.

Pardo (2014) discussed the same idea of using technology and digital story telling (DS) to improve students’ writing skills. He mentioned that participants who used DS also have improved their level of grammar proficiency. It was found that 21 undergraduates in Valencia had shown that there were fewer grammatical errors after they had experienced DS. The same

DS technique was experimented in Turkey. A case study was carried out with 63 (EFL) students and three teachers to identify the impact of DS among the participants. At the end of the study, the researchers found out that the participants had a good command of grammar rules and mechanics including spelling, capitalization, as well as punctuation (Dollar & Tolu, 2015).

Alqahtani & Elumalai (2020) investigated Saudi students who did not have sufficient competency to write authentic English paragraphs. In their study, they stated that text is a primary tool for students to gain the knowledge in writing skills. Their study investigated the analysis of lexical and cohesive ties usage in undergraduate students' writing by applying task-based language learning methodology. The study lasted for 15 weeks and included 35 students from an advanced ESL Reading class at King Saud University, Arts College in Riyadh. Teachers focused on improving the students' verbal efficiency. There was a great dependence on extrinsic and instrumental motivation to learn the language. They gave special attention to the sentence structure, grammar, and Syntax, discourse markers or connectives. The students were asked to write on four topics including behavioral psychology, scientific and two general passages throughout the semester respectively. The analysis of data proved that the students' language abilities in grammar and vocabulary significantly improved.

Finally, Ibrahim (2020) examined Arab students' inability to achieve scores in the IELTS required to join higher education due to poor English Skills, especially writing. It was concluded that their low proficiency in writing would not hinder the process of learning. On the contrary, giving them more effort in classes may also benefit their peers. If students are placed in the scholarly medium, they will be able to communicate because they have to. They will also be able to write presentations, study general vocabulary, professional vocabulary and even write a research.

3. Methods

This study is a quantitative pre-test /post-test study to analyze the Arab students' common errors in academic writing. The pre-test was analyzed for errors according to which a tailored curriculum was implemented. After applying the curriculum, a post-test was conducted to examine the difference in the students' performance after the course to examine its effectiveness.

3.1. The Participants

The sample was a non-random quota that originally consisted of 40 students from first year batch 2020, studying English at RAK Medical & Health Sciences University in the United Arab Emirates. Before the participants enrolled in the university, they had general classes in English from elementary to high school. The students were all Arabs, who failed the English placement test and whose level of English was between A1 and B2. Their level was detected from their performance in the placement test, that the participants had before joining the course, and from the instructor's evaluation. The distribution of the students' level of English can be shown in the following figure:

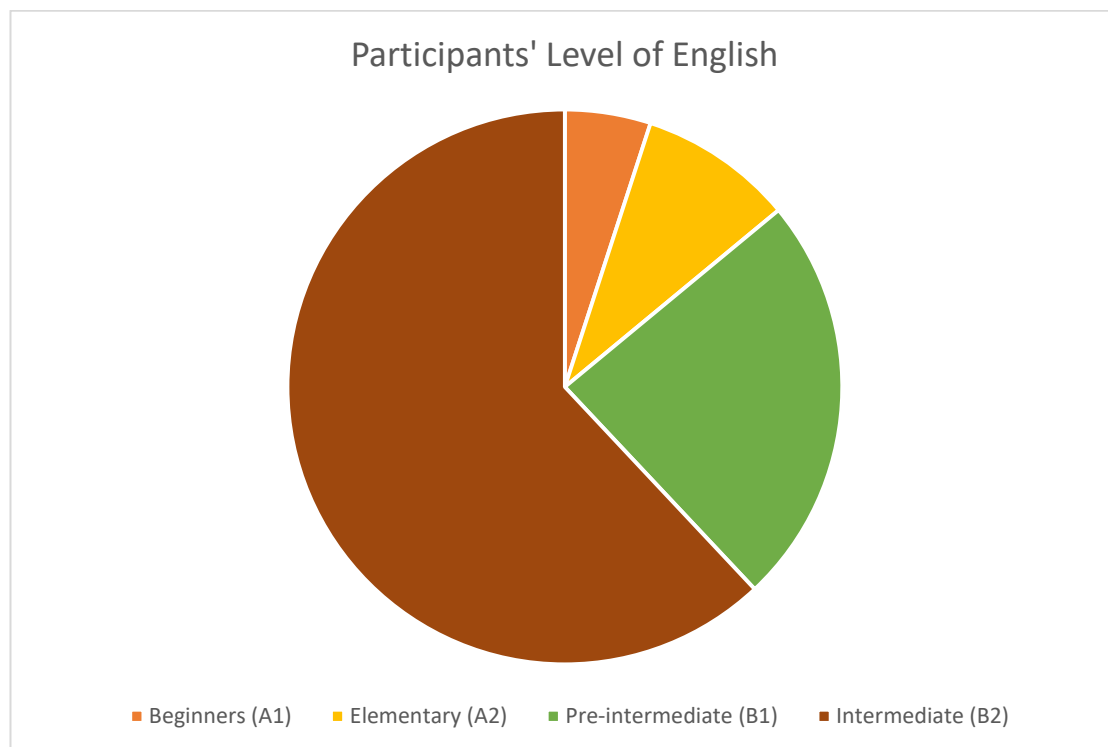


Figure1: Participants' level of English

3.2. Instruments

The research was conducted during the English course for first year students who have failed the placement test. One lecturer delivered the course, who is also the researcher. The researcher used the pre/post-test method to analyze the difference in the students' performance before and after applying the structured curriculum. The curriculum was designed to fulfill the students' needs or deficiencies in writing. The main course delivered to the participants is an academic writing program consisting of five genres of Academic writing. The course was approximately three months (one semester).

In the normal academic writing course, the syllabus delivered included different genres of writing like argumentative, process, narrative, descriptive, and writing a formal letter or an email. The students wrote on each one of these topics in the pre-test. The researcher analyzed the errors of the participants to detect the needs of the students in writing. Then the researcher designed a structured writing syllabus that concentrated on the students' deficiencies and their weak points. In other words, it concentrated on the writing mechanics based on the level of English proficiency of the participants, and their results from the pre-test.

The main objective of the course was to teach the students to write efficiently an error-free essay. During the designed course, the students were introduced to types of writing fundamentals like punctuation, grammar, sentence structure, subject-verb agreement etc. These specific types of writing fundamentals were chosen based on the analyses of the participants' writings in their pre-test. The instructor of the course directed the students to follow a specific process during the course, where the instructor introduced the lessons, followed by exercises and activities for practice.

4. Results and Data Analysis

After evaluating the pre-tests, the researcher examined the common errors that the majority of the students constantly repeated in most of the papers. The tasks given to the students were analyzed and from the results of the analyses of the papers, a designed curriculum that included the topics subject to errors in the pre-test was implemented. The researcher used the pre/post-test method to validate the syllabus that was implemented.

From the analyses of the pre-test, most of the students had problems in structuring a sentence or a paragraph. Through analyzing the papers, the following errors were common: capitalization, punctuations, sentence structure. Subject-verb agreement, frontal adverbs, verbs tenses, nouns, pronouns, articles, and prepositions. The researcher also noticed that many students tend to translate the sentences from Arabic to English in their minds before writing them. Therefore, the product sentences were English in Arabic sentence-structure and not in the correct English structure.

The same writing genres were administered over the course of three months before and after completion of the recommended syllabus. The key objective of the pre-post writing examinations was to analyze the common mistakes that were prevalent in most of the papers. Therefore, from the errors mentioned above, the topics covered in the designed academic writing syllabus were as follows:

Table 1: The Topics Covered in the Designed Academic Writing Syllabus

Topic	Description	Remarks
Capitalization	It included <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Common Nouns - Proper Nouns With examples from different contexts	It was one of the most common mistakes that the students did not pay much attention to it.
Punctuations	The function and location of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Commas - Full stops - Semicolons - Colons - Quotation marks - Exclamation marks - Question marks 	Students seem not to be aware of the importance of punctuation. Run-on sentences were one of the common errors prevalent in most of the papers.
Frontal Adverbs	It included : Every Frontal adverb was explained regarding its function and location. The Adverbs included were adverbs of : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Frequency - Manner - Time - Place 	Frontal adverbs are frequently used in writing especially in descriptive essay. It was noticed that frontal adverbs were either wrongly chosen or misplaced

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Affirmation - Degree 	
Verb tenses	<p>It included: The frequently used tenses were explained with reference to form and function.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Present tense - Past tense - Present Perfect - Continuous tenses - Future tenses 	It was one of the most common errors. Most of the students were facing problems choosing the correct tense of the verb. Sometimes they were not able to write the correct form of the verb, especially the irregular ones.
Vocabulary	<p>It includes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some words and their alternatives in a more sophisticated vocabulary. Like for example they were given synonyms for the word “problem” as Challenge, dilemma, predicament, or obstacle....etc. 	It was noticed from the pre-test that students tend to use very simple vocabulary that makes their essays seem childish or less sophisticated. They repeat the word “thing” more often and they use very flat words like “good” and “bad”
Articles and Prepositions	<p>It included :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Definite and Indefinite Articles - Commonly used prepositions and their functions 	
Subject –Verb Agreement	<p>It included :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nouns & pronouns - Forms of verbs with every pronoun - Irregular pronouns or nouns that may seem plural although they are singular and vice versa 	This topic needs to be explained over a long period, but that was not feasible. However, the main points were covered by providing the students with the most common tips and errors.
Sentence Structure	<p>It included :</p> <p>Types of sentences and their function. It covered :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Simple Sentences - Compound sentences - Complex sentences <p>The same topic included :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Main Clauses - Subordinate clauses - Conjunctions - Subordinate conjunctions 	The researcher focused on the importance of using various types of sentences in writing to avoid monotony.
Difference between Arabic & English Sentence Structure	<p>This topic included :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explanation of the basic sentence structures and differences between English and Arabic. <p>For example: English only has verbal sentences. Arabic has verbal and nominal sentences. Arabic’s nominal sentences do not need verbs</p>	This topic was given as a separate topic from the previous topic (sentence structure) due to its importance. It is important because translating sentences from Arabic to English structure was a prevalent error in most of the papers due to the Arabic background of the student that

	and typically consists of two nouns only. - The location of the subject and the verb in Arabic and English sentence structure. - The use of different verbs in Arabic and how they are different than English - The location of Adverbs and Adjectives in Arabic and English sentence structure - Some of the common features between the two languages were also discussed	affected their writing.
Spelling	Was excluded from the topics included in the syllabus	In the pre-test, some students ignored the instructions and handed the tasks as word files or PDF files where computer spell-check was used. Consequently, no spelling mistakes were detected, only wrong use of certain words that could not be observed by spell-check were found

All of the above topics were covered using examples and followed by exercise sheets for practice. After finishing the topics, the students were asked to write the same writing genres that the pre-test included, but different subjects. Both, pre-test and post-test were compared. While comparing the pre-and post-test, the researcher found notable findings. Unlike the pre-test, the post-test indicated a development in the performance in some aspects. From the following table and figure, it is noticed that the number of some common errors have decreased.

Table 2: Comparison between Numbers and Percentages of Errors in the Pre and Post-Tests

Error Type	No. of Errors		Percentage	
	Post-test	Pre-test	Pre- test %	Post-test %
Capitalization	31	11	86%	31%
Punctuation	35	18	97%	50%
Sentence Structure	16	9	44%	25%
Use of Arabic Structures	35	14	97%	38%
Frontal Adverbs	16	6	44%	17%
Verb Tenses	21	13	58%	36%
Subject-Verb Agreement	17	9	47%	25%
Nouns/Pronouns	9	9	25%	25%
Articles	5	5	14%	14%
Prepositions	9	5	25%	14%
Spelling	Not Applicable			

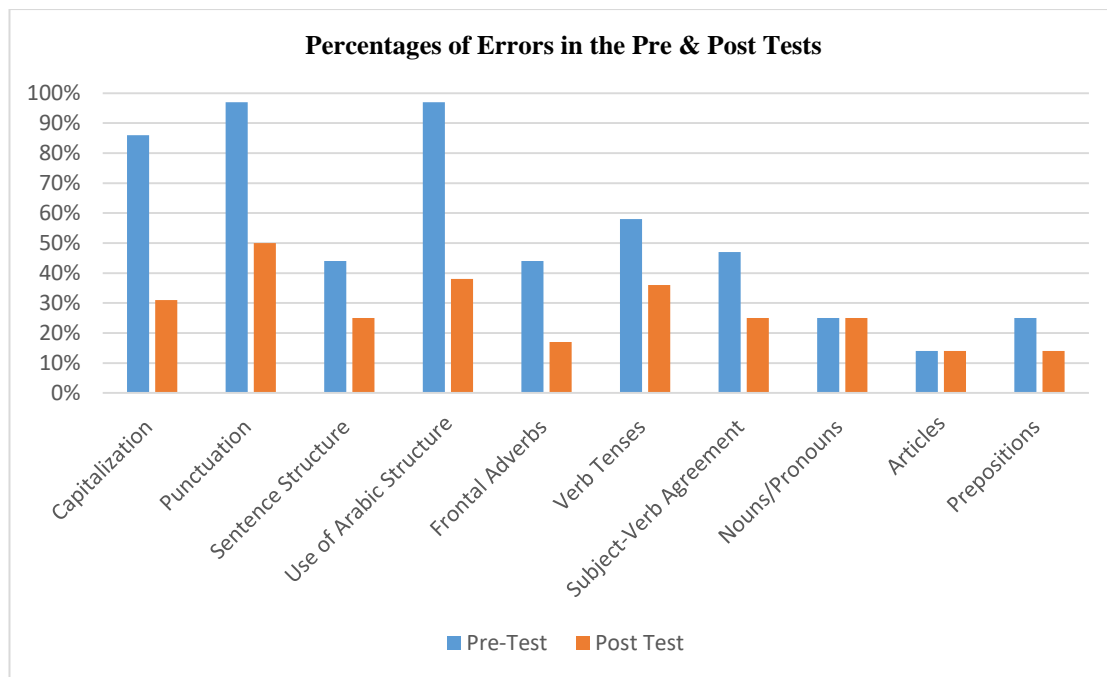
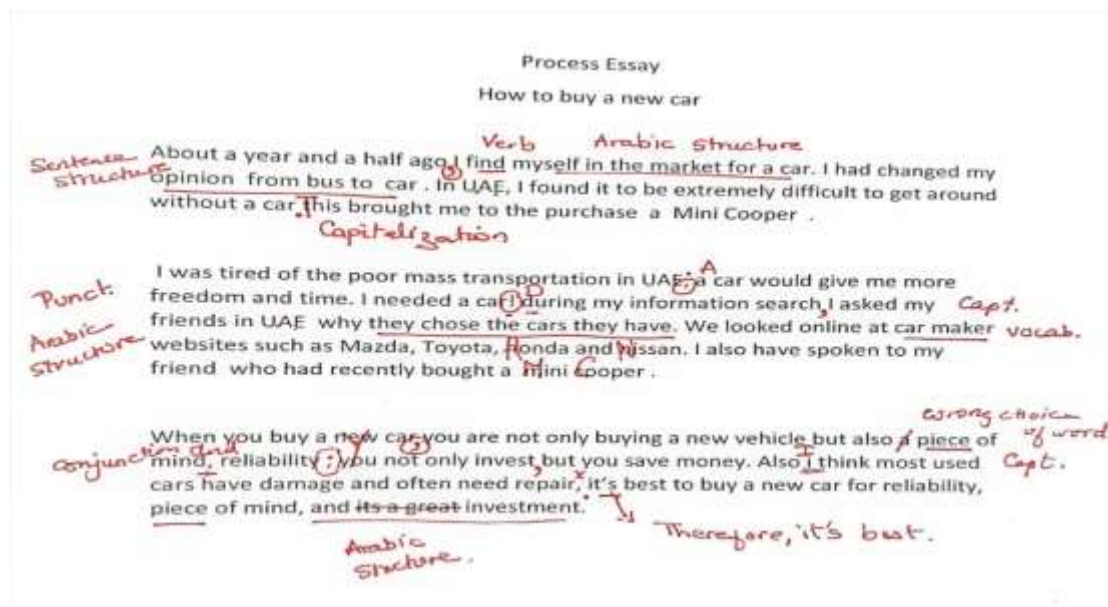


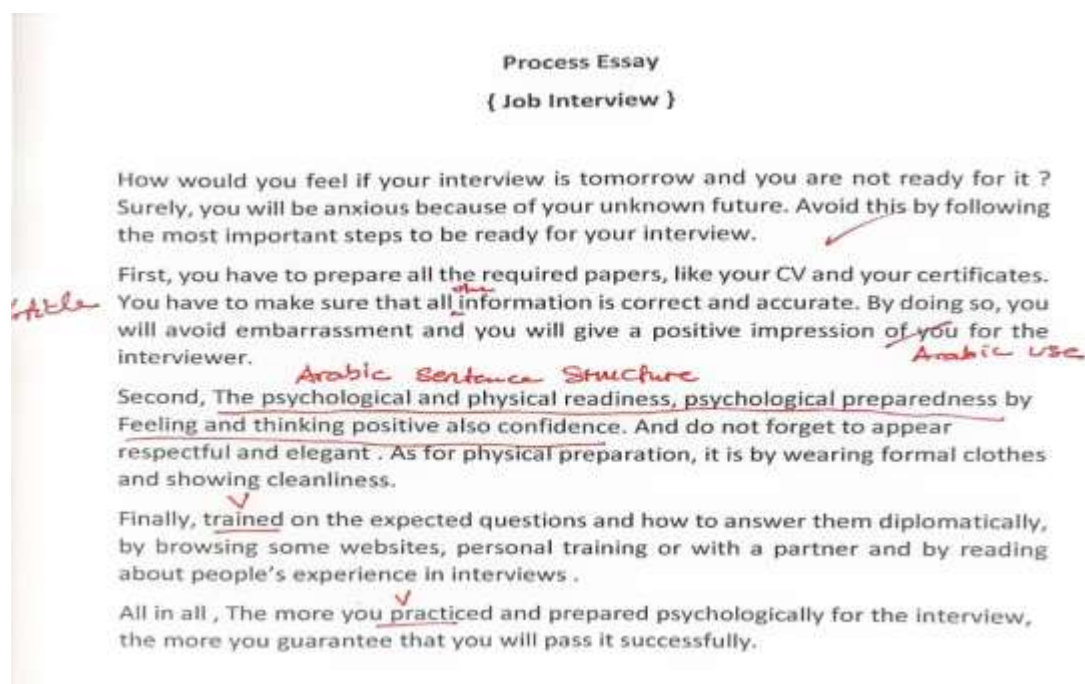
Figure 2: Comparison between Percentages of Errors in the Pre and Post Tests

The development of the students' performance in some aspects is also illustrated in the above graph. Likewise, the below copies of Pre/post-tests of one student show the development in writing performance. The progress in grammar and structure is evident as well as the choice of words, which is slightly better.

Pre-Test Sample



Post-Test Sample



From the above writing samples and table that show a comparison of students' performance in pre-and post-tests, the pre-test showed that students were facing challenges in the fundamentals of English writing as well as structural challenges. In this aspect, errors that were very high in percentage are those related to Punctuation (97%), use of Arabic structure (97%) and Capitalization (86%), followed by Verb tenses (58%) and subject verb agreement (47%). Errors related to sentence structure reached (44%), which is the same error percentage of frontal adverbs. The least percentages of errors were in the use of nouns and pronouns (25%) equal to the percentages of errors in the use of prepositions. Finally, the error percentage in the use of articles was only (14%). Spelling errors have been the least problematic category since the writing was handed online and there was computer spell-check as mentioned above. Only a few mistakes were identified in this category due to wrong selection of words.

However, as pre-test performance was compared to post-test, major variations were found due to the improvements in students' writing. From the analyses of the post-tests, it was noticed that all categories improved to a great extent except for two categories that did not show any development. The percentages of errors decreased in most categories. The punctuation errors decreased from 97% to 50%, which means that it decreased by 47%. The use of Arabic structures decreased by 59% (from 97% to 38%). Capitalization errors also decreased by 55% (from 86% to 31%). The errors related to the use of Frontal Adverbs decreased by 27% (From 44% to 17%) . Tenses and Subject verb agreement errors improved with the same percentage of 22%. Tenses errors' percentage changed from 58% to 36% and Subject verb Agreement errors changed from 47% to 25%. Moreover Sentence structure errors improved by 19% (from 44% to 19%). Prepositions errors decreased by 11% (from 25% to 14%). As for the nouns, pronouns, and articles' errors, there are no significant changes, as the percentages in the pre and post-test remained the same, 25% errors for nouns and pronouns and 14% errors for articles.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that there are substantial variations between pre-and post-test results, where students' writing improved due to course design that concentrated on the needs of the students and the deficiencies in their writings. As it is observed in the pre-test, the majority of the students had problems in writing in general, and in writing fundamentals in particular. Most of the students did not know how to make a grammatically and correctly structured sentence, paragraph, or essay. This may be attributed to writing courses that students had previously that did not rely on some elements of writing. Most of the Arab students studied in the general English curriculum before joining the university. However, in order for students to be efficient writers, they need to participate in writing classes where each course focuses on a particular aspect of writing. On the other hand, the findings of the post-tests, indicate an increase in students' learning and also report an increase in the coherence and structure of writing. It happened because the students were involved in a course of writing that concentrated on fundamentals of writing where the students had difficulties.

The findings of this research are compatible with the conclusions stated above by Huwari and Al-Khasawneh (2013) that the reasons behind the students' deficiencies in writing were their lack of understanding of grammar and vocabulary, and that

they did not practice writing until they reached the tertiary level. However, as students joined in rigorous writing courses, their writing progressed.

In addition, Nuruzzaman, Islam, & Shuchi (2018) echoed the same idea that the reason behind the writing deficiencies of EFL Saudi students is the schooling system where English has not been well taught. In addition, Ansari (2012) reported that "more than 50% of Saudi EFL students do not know how to write in English, and most of them are unaware of cursive writing" (p. 521). He figured out the same conclusion as this research, that English lessons should be intensive and concentrate on the needs of students to develop their English in general. In other words, the course of writing should be based on the needs of the students in writing in order to achieve the best outcomes and to allow students to develop their writing.

Therefore, classroom instruction plays a central role in dealing with students' writing errors, and different techniques are recommended to help Arab students and other EFL learners to write well in English. Therefore, the results of the present study confirm Ansari's (2012) that English learning courses should be focused on student writing limitations and needs.

In addition, Leki (2003) emphasized that writing is a complicated and complex activity that cannot be taught as a whole, but it should be separated into writing aspects where each writing course focuses on certain aspect. The results of this research also suggest that if a writing course is structured to improve the students' deficiencies in writing, there is a positive outcome for students to improve their writing skills. Yet, time was an important factor in this study. Some deficiencies in the students' writings needed more time to explain and practice thoroughly, but the utmost was done to give them the core and the most important key points.

Since writing is a challenging and complicated process, it takes time and effort to expect students to write well, and teachers cannot teach students anything they need to write in one lesson. In other words, instructors can neither teach all the elements of the process of writing in one course nor expect their students to fully improve their writing skills. Writing teachers need to teach multiple writing classes instead, each centered on only one aspect of writing at a time, such as fundamentals of writing, grammar, vocabulary, material, and organization. By doing so, students would learn a new writing element of each lesson, and by finishing multiple writing classes, they would have had enough practical lessons to concentrate on each element.

6. Conclusion

This study attempts to prove that a writing course focusing on students' errors is the best method to increase their success in Academic writing. Teaching writing plays a critical role in helping students to learn from their mistakes and overcome their difficulties in writing. Writing teachers should take into account the needs of the students in writing, evaluate their limitations, and then plan a course accordingly. Analysis of student writing deficiencies is required to recognise the problems they face, and the syllabus should be structured accordingly.

Therefore, it is mandatory that at the beginning of any writing course, a needs analysis has to be done by analyzing the students' common errors. This will enable the instructor to target the weak aspects in the students' writing and improve them to enhance the students' writing. In this study, grammatical and structural problems were the main issues for the students. Another main problem was the interference of their mother tongue, which is Arabic, in the structure of the sentences. One of the most common errors that students make is to translate the sentences between the two languages in the same order. Since English and Arabic are two different languages from two different origins, each has its own grammar, vocabulary, style and phonology. There is a difference in the basic grammatical structure of the sentence in the two languages. Therefore, there characteristics must never be mixed. The structured curriculum targeted these problems in an attempt to improve the proficiency of the academic writing of the Arab students.

The results of this study are useful for Academic writing teaching, as they allow teachers to gain knowledge of the positive consequences of developing successful writing courses based on student writing vulnerabilities. Writing instructors will take the pre-test before beginning the course to analyze the needs of their students in writing, and then plan the syllabus accordingly. This research is valuable not only for those who have an interest in language teaching and learning, but also for second-and foreign-language writing teachers and learners, curricula designers and policy makers in education.

References

- Al Badi, I. A. H. (2015). Academic writing difficulties of ESL learners. *In The 2015 WEI International Academic Conference Proceedings*, 1(1), 65-78. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280696919_ACADEMIC_WRITING_DIFFICULTIES_OF_ESL_LEARNERS
- Alqahtani, M., & Elumalai, K. (2020). Analysis of Lexical and Cohesive Ties usage in Undergraduate Students' Writing by Applying Task-Based Language Learning Methodology. *Arab World English Journal*, 11(1), 79-90. <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no1.7>
- Anita, R. (2016). Using "Storybird" for Teaching Narrative Writing. *Proceeding of the Fourth International Seminar on English Language and Teaching (ISELT-4)*, 230-239. <https://dx.doi.org/10.24127/pj.v9i2.2805>

- Ansari, A. A. (2012). Teaching of English to Arab students: Problems and remedies. *Educational Research*, 3(6), 519-524. Retrieved from <https://www.interestjournals.org/articles/teaching-of-english-to-arab-students-problems-and-remedies.pdf>
- Barry, D. (2014). *The Impact of Native Arabic on English Writing as a Second Language*. Clarkston: Michigan.
- Dollar, Y. K., & Tolu, A. T. (2015). My First Digital Story: A Case Study with 5th Grade Turkish English Language Learners. *ELT Research Journal*, 4(3): 172–185. Retrieved from: <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/296308>
- Frodesen, J. (2009). The academic writing development of generation 1.5 latecomer. In M. Roberge, M. siegal, & L. Harklau (Eds.), *Generation 1.5 in college composition*, (pp. 91-104). New York, NY: Routledge. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311344891_The_academic_writing_development_of_a_Generation_15_late_comer
- Hapsari, E. W., & Sukavatee, P. (2018). Second Language Writing Instruction: A Recent Practice in Indonesia. *Journal of Linguistic and English Teaching*, 3(1). Retrieved from: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/e2c2/9172551fbadb6644d263fdd050105032779e.pdf>
- Hirano, E. (2014). Refugees in first-year College: Academic writing challenges and resources. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 23(1), 37-52. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2014.01.001>
- Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M., & Cope, J. A. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, 70(2), 125-132. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.1986.tb05256.x>
- Hourani, T. M. Y. (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*. British University in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Retrieved from: <https://bspace.buid.ac.ae/bitstream/1234/225/1/20050055.pdf>
- Huwari, I., & Al-Khasawneh, F. (2013). The reasons behind the weaknesses of writing in English among pre-year students' At Taibah University. *English for Specific Purposes World*, 38(14), 1-9. Retrieved from: <http://repo.uum.edu.my/10723/>
- Ibrahim, O. (2020). IELTS and IESOL as English Proficiency Assessment Methods for Native Arab Students in a Health Sciences University in the United Arab Emirates. *British Journal of Education*, 8(8), 16-32. Retrieved from: <https://www.eajournals.org/wp-content/uploads/IELTS-and-IESOL-as-English-Proficiency-Assessment-Methods-for-Native-Arab-Students-in-a-Health-Sciences-University-in-the-United-Arab-Emirates.pdf>
- Kelly, J. D., & Melor, M. Y. (2016). The Effectiveness of Using Sentence Makers in Improving Writing Performance among Pupils in Lubok Antu Rural Schools *Proceeding of the International Conference on Education in the 21th Century*, 469–475. Retrieved from: <http://pasca.um.ac.id/conferences/index.php/ice/article/view/63/60>
- Leki, I. (2003). A challenge to L2 writing professionals: Is writing overrated? In B. Kroll (Ed.), *Exploring dynamics of L2 writing* (pp. 315-331). New York: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139524810>
- Mallia, J. (2015). Developing a Teaching and Teacher-training Rationale for Academic Writing in English. *Arab World English Journal*, 6(2), 3-16. DOI: [10.24093/awej/vol6no2.1](https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol6no2.1)
- McDonough, K., & Crawford, W. J. (2018). Identifying Effective Writing Tasks for Use in EFL Write-to-learn Language Contexts. *The Language Learning Journal*, 46(1), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2018.1465990>
- Musa, F. (2010). Teaching writing to post-secondary students: Procedure and technicalities in an EFL classroom. In *First National Conference on English Language Teaching*, Al-Quds Open University, Palestine. Retrieved from: <http://www.qou.edu/english/conferences/firstNationalConference/pdfFiles/farouqMusa.pdf>
- Nuruzzaman, M., Islam, A. S., & Shuchi, I. J. (2018). An analysis of errors committed by Saudi non-English major students in the English paragraph writing: A study of comparisons. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 9(1), 31-39. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.alls.v.9n.1p.31>
- Pardo, B. S. (2014). Digital Storytelling: A Case Study of the Creation, and Narration of a Story by EFL Learners El. *Digital Education Review*, (26): 74–84. Retrieved from: <https://revistes.ub.edu/index.php/der/article/viewFile/11582/pdf>
- Rahmawati, O. I. (2017). Think-Pair-Share: A Technique to Enhance Students' Writing Skill. *Jurnal Pendidikan Edutama*, 4(1): 49–58. Retrieved from: <https://ejurnal.ikipgribojonegoro.ac.id/index.php/JPE/article/view/42/40>
- Salem, M. S. A. S. (2007). *The effect of journal writing on written performance, writing apprehension, and attitudes of Egyptian English majors* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). The Pennsylvania State University, State College, PA. Retrieved from: https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final_submissions/4340
- Sawalmeh, M. H. M. (2013). Error analysis of written English essays: The case of students of the preparatory year program in Saudi Arabia. *English for Specific Purposes World*, 14(40), 1-17. Retrieved from: http://esp-world.info/Articles_40/Sawalmeh.pdf
- Sulaiman, S. (2017). Improving Students' Achievement in Writing Narrative Text Through Modelling Technique in the Second Semester of the Eight-Year Students of Public Junior High School 2 Blitar. *International Research-Based Education Journal*, 1(1), 46-57. Retrieved from: <http://journal2.um.ac.id/index.php/irbej/article/view/895/522>
- Tahaineh, Y. (2010). Arab EFL university students' errors in the use of prepositions. *Modern Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 2(1), 76–112. Retrieved from: https://www.academia.edu/6833950/MJAL2_1JANUARY2010_ISSN_0974_8741_Arab_EFL_University_Students

Errors in the Use of Prepositions Yousef Sharif Tahaine Arab EFL University Students Errors in the Use of Prepositions

- Terraschke, A., & Wahid, R. (2011). The impact of EAP study on the academic experiences of international postgraduate students in Australia. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 10(3), 173-182. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2011.05.003>
- Yee, B. C., & Kee, L. L. (2017). Digital Writing in English Language Writing Instruction. *International Research Journal of Language and Literature*, 28: 1–16. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328493053_Digital_Writing_in_English_Language_Writing_Instruction
- Zakaria, M., & Abdul Aziz, A. (2019). The Impact of Digital Storytelling on ESL Narrative Writing Skill. *Arab World English Journal* Vol. 5(1), 319 – 332. <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/call5.22>
- Zuhour, B. Y., & Fatima, S. A. (2015). Exploring the most common types of writing problems among English language and translation major sophomore female students at Tabuk University. *Asian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences*, 3(2), 7-26. <https://dx.doi.org/10.24897/acn.64.68.164>.