

Writing Difficulties among Undergraduate Arab Students in English Language: A Case Study of Shaqra University

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Abstract

Writing is one of the important skills for English language acquisition. This study aims to investigate the issues of EFL learners' obstacles in writing skills. Writing is the key skill to enhance the language skills. To examine the obstacles and hindrances of writing skills among the undergraduate students, the study was conducted among the undergraduate students of the Shaqra University. All the participants are requested to write an answer to the research questions that are applied to the study investigations. When examining the answers of all the participants it could analyze the students who have serious problems with writing skills. The students require more attention to, grammar mistakes and spelling mistakes and punctuation. After meticulously examining the answers of the participants, researchers found out the students need thorough practice in writing skills.

Keywords

Writing skills, EFL grammatical skills and composition skills.

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Introduction.

Verbal literacy is very important in English language acquisition; however, writing is significantly related to acquiring linguistics knowledge. Comparatively among the other skills Writing is considered much much-required skill in this contemporary world. Any EFL or ESL learners who are not giving much attention and practice to improve their writing skills may encounter difficulty in performing and developing their academic careers. It is a fact that more than any other skill writing requires consistent practice and exercises to acquire the impeccable writing skill. In this sophisticated world error-free writing provides more opportunities to the EFL learners, in fact it can only be achieved with constant practice and more knowledge about linguistics.

Listening, speaking, reading and writing are the four essentials' skills to master language, nowadays writing becomes one of the obstacles in the academic domain of the Arab students, because of the alphabetical system between in the English and Arabic languages. "Writing is the process of communicating thoughts and ideas in readable form by employing symbols such as alphabets letters, punctuations and spaces" (Banwell,2018). Mastering writing skill is an output which depends up many inputs such as reading and listening skills, lack of reading and listening lead to poor writing skill, and it is easy to catch up the trivial mistakes of spelling to poor sentences. Writing is one of the best ways evaluate the academic performance of the learners.

Importance of the Writing Skills

The writing can improve only through the gradual process, it requires meticulous attention and step by step practice, A learner should thorough with lower lever skills such as grammar rules, Spelling, punctuation, and these are skills considered the base of the wiring skill and if one not exercised and acquired this skill it will badly reflect in the higher lever skills, such as narrative writing and formal sentence constructions so on. The higher-level skill is the much-required skill to EFL OR ESL, it judges your knowledge in your learning of English language. Writing is an essential skill for communication, along with speaking skills. one of the best ways to prove EFL or ESL learners' knowledge of the English language is the immaculate writing skill, so it is the need of an hour a learner should spend a consecutive amount of the time for enhancing writing skills by engaged in reading and practice the conventional grammar rules to achieve the standard of writing skill.

Objective the Study

This study aims to analyze the problems and issues of the EFL learners' difficulties in writing in the English language

Literature Review

According to Muahmmed Nadheem Anwar and Nazir Ahmed (2016) investigation with second language learners in writing is more difficult than speaking because the former is more formal than the latter. Writing skills can't be developed without being proficient in the vocabulary and grammar of that language. Therefore, writing must follow conscious construction than speaking which relates to complex sentences and narratives. Writing simply includes sentences and when sentences are combined into paragraphs and paragraphs into chapters, then chapters into bodies, therefore, all sentences need to be followed with careful writing structures. So, to improve the EFL learners' writing skills, they could need constant practice in writing because academic writing requires formal, clear, and unpretentious prose writing.

Writing is the process of communicating thoughts and ideas in readable form by employing symbols such as alphabet letters, punctuations, and spaces. (Born Well 2018). Therefore, writing is the proper way to convey ideas and thoughts to society. Hyland (2012), stresses the reliance on style, content, and tangible information and detail that protect the formal style that qualifies writing to be academic and this is presented to its specific audience, scholars and teachers.

Bryne (1988) divided the problems that make writing difficult into three categories. The first is the linguistic difficulty, linguistics aspects like grammar, vocabulary, language use and choice of sentences in writing must be fully monitored. Considering the main features of academic writing, it becomes a problem for EFL or ESL learners to construct accurate, clear and organized sentences but errors and mistakes are common in learning since English is a foreign language.

Methodology

This study focuses on problems and errors in EFL students writing skills in the English language. Qualitative methodology was followed to achieve the objective of the study because the qualitative method enables the participants to express their behavior and experiences towards their problem in writing the English language. Therefore, a semi-structured interview was arranged with the participants to observe the cause. The semi-structured interview included two sections, pre and post writing interviews with participants.

Participants

The study was conducted with EFL male students from the English department, the participants are studying BA English and literature course, and they are from the different levels at science and humanities college, Shaqra University.

Research Question

This aims to answer the following main questions in the research what are the errors often committed by EFL students when writing in the English language?

This study analyses the answer to the research questions from the pre and post interviews of participants. The five students are identified as S1 to S5 in this research, Pre writing interview the first question is, "Do you follow any strategies to improve the English writing skills". S1 said that "I do follow some strategies like focusing on reading to learn spelling so that I can write anything without spelling mistakes". This answer shows that the student limit himself by not fully involved innovative methods to improve his writing skill.

S2 stated that, "I don't follow any particulate step for improving writing skills than class room learning", While S3 said, "I try to learn how to use the punctuation marks in writing correctly, but I am still struggling to improve", all these students are different levels, but their knowledge of the writing skills seem that they all need more practice and meticulous attention to improve their higher level in academic writing.

S4 added that "issued to have spelling mistakes while writing even in the exam, but I have the desire to improve myself by practicing all paragraphs or sentences before any writing skills" Grammar mistakes, spelling, and punctuations are the most common errors made by Arab EFL students when in writing in English. All the participants seem they are very limited in their knowledge of writing skills, and they desire to improve their skills. Secondly, the participants are requested to answer post writing question, such as what are the mistakes you make while writing in the English language?

The participants answer as follows:

S1 said that, "Yes, I make mistakes in writing letters, and when I begin to write, I forger some letters, and make speling mistakes."

S2 added that "I misspell a lot considering that my first language is Arabic, the way you write words are determined by what you hear, and that is not the case most of the time in English, also done by many students, this stems from out start in learning language and nobody taught writing skill in the beginning.

S3 added that “sometimes I forget letters and I don’t find vocabulary, that make my narrative not clear or not good. Also, I have a problem with lack of focus on the topic of text, and I can’t sometime write the silent letter in the word”. S4 stated that “I make mistakes in word order and spelling sometimes can’t write some difficult words, and most of the time, I forget the starting the sentence in capital letters”.

Also the participants were requested to answer if they could write a narrative text on a particular topic

S1 stated that “I don’t think so because I lack in words and I can’t organize the ideas into the correct order”

S2 said that “its is not that easy for me, but I found that if I think about it and prepare it firstly in my first language (Arabic) and then I can translate ideas into English”

S3 said, “No I don’t”.

S4 stated that “because I have a problem in vocabulary, grammar rules and spelling, I can’t construct a sentence or a paragraph on my own”

From the above discussions, the study finds that they have difficulty and problems with capitalization, spelling mistakes and lack of knowledge in vocabulary, and due to that, they are committing frequent errors while writing in the English language. Also, the responses show that they have less knowledge of academic writing practices. The study results suggest that learners develop reading habits because reading will help the learner to build their vocabulary.

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Conclusion

As mentioned earlier, the main objective of this study is to identify the difficulties of the Arabs in learning English as a second language, particularly in writing. To conclude, the present study found that the most frequent errors made by Arab EFL learners were using the punctuation marks in the right positions, and discussions show that they have major problems in writing in the English language. Most of the frequent errors made by Arab EFL learners are grammar mistakes and spelling mistakes, punctuations and problems in organizing ideas to construct a

sentence. Punctuation marks are very important to express any ideas in the right way and EFL learners also need to be aware of grammar rules and spelling mistakes to improve writing skills in the English language. Most of the students have very limited knowledge of the academic writing, to improve the standard, the teacher also must pay attention during the class time for the development of the skills. the study also found that all Arab EFL learners need improvements and practice more on their writing skills, such as grammar structure, spelling, punctuation marks, capitalization, and good knowledge and vocabulary because writing is a very necessary skill to master the English language.

Suggestions for the Future Study

Since the study was only conducted among the students of a small number of the students the study should be expanded and conducted on a large number of the students in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia so the results are clearer and more comprehensive.

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