Investigating College of Education Students' Difficulties in Writing English Language at Salahaddin University

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Abstract

This study aims to recognize the difficulties that confront students of English in progressing their skills and in particular writing skill along with the difficulties which face the English Language teachers in teaching these skills as well beside their points of view. This study can be considered as the response to the frequent complaints about the weakness of the students in writing either in wording the text, using grammatical rules, selecting vocabularies or ideas connection; therefore students show deficiency concerning their performance of linguistic skills and their abilities to master the language that they study in their courses. These lessening appear clearly in their assignments and tasks that they are required to adopt through the learning process.

The researcher adopts a questionnaire for English teachers to show their points of view related to these problems that face them in teaching writing, the second questionnaire is for the students. The results are achieved, classified and then computed statistically. In the light of the results obtained, conclusions and recommendations are presented.

Keywords: grammatical rules, linguistic skills, performance, writing skill.

تقصي صعوبات مهارة الكتابة باللغة الانكليزية لدى طلاب كلية التربية في جامعة صلاح الدين

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قسم اللغة الانكليزية

الملخص

تهدف الدراسة الى التعرف على الصعوبات التي يواجهها طالبيه اللغة الانكليزية في تعلم اللغة الانكليزية وتطوير قابلياتهم وبالتحديد قابلية الكتابة وايضا المشاكل التي تواجه التدريسيين ضمن نفس المشكلة من خلال الاطلاع على وجهات نظرهم. ان هذه الدراسة هي استجابة للشكاوى المكررة في صياغة النص والقواعد النحوية، واستخدام المفردات وبالتالي يفتقر الطلبة في أدائهم لتلك المهارات اللغوية والقدرة على إتقان اللغة التي يدرسونها . تظهر هذه المشاكل بوضوح عند قيامهم بالمهام والنشاطات اللغوية المطلوبة في عملية التعلم..

لقد تبنى الباحث نوعين من الاستبيان الاول يخص تدريسيي اللغة الانكليزية لغرض معرفة وجهات نظرهم بالصعوبات التي يواجهونها في تدريس الكتابة، والاستبيان الثاني موجه الى الطلاب للكشف عن الصعوبات التي يعانون منها عند تعلم مهارة الكتابة. يتم بعد ذلك تحديد النتائج وتحليلها واحتسابها احصائيا في ضوء النتائج التي توصل اليها الباحث، و من خلال النتائج ايضا يقدم الباحث استنتاجاته وتوصياته.

مفاتيح البحث: القواعد النحوية, المهارة اللغوية, الاداء, مهارة الكتابة

Introduction

The skill of writing composition in English is considered the most important task of the language that the students need in their education especially at the university level. Particularly, the students who are specialized in English and its literature, altogether with the teachers of English or to the grade English Teacher. In spite of the importance of the writing skill, that was given during the time spent educating such aptitudes at the college level, however by and large, such proof stays as a standard levels for the understudies. By and large, it identified with this composition expertise remains low as the students' scores and their composed creation in (subjects), looks into, and other demonstrate.

So many researchers find that, the reasons behind students achievements are very clear by means of the several weaknesses which are related to the skill of writing in English. On the other hand, another group of researchers hints to the school teachers and their focus on using short exams or the multiple choice or to the difference between Arabic and grammar and its syntax from the English grammar.

While others indicate that the weaknesses in the general level which are related to the skill of writing are due to fact that the students have no desire in the specialization they are studying. Some students are forced to study English language and English literature against their real wishes or desires. Such matters reflect negatively the level of students learning and their motivation for learning. Generally speaking, in other areas of different studies, a few specialists ascribe this shortcoming to the English dialect for the most part and in the ability of writing specifically to the low level of preparing that was given to the students in the preliminary and auxiliary schools reviews that make them genuinely non-content from the syllabuses of writing in English that any school requires it.

So, the problem of writing in English remains the most crucial ones that make the teacher and the student of all levels of education get anxious and worried either in the school or in the university. Previously, the researcher Al Shabeel (2001:p.24) conducts a study about the difficulties and the problems of the students specialized in English language in Salahaddin University, her study showed tangible weakness in the different skills of the English language and in different degrees. The weakness in the skills of writing was higher than the other skills. The

researcher attributes this to the little training according to what was mentioned previously. It is important to note that variables of the issue honestly get noticeable from understanding perspective as well as the specialist directed the review with the trust of achieving the characteristics of the genuine challenges that the understudies and the instructor consider to be a reason in the trouble of educating and taking in the aptitudes of writing in the Salahaddin University.

Literature Review

This part tackles a brief discussion of the major writing theories beside its handling with some previous studies regarding teaching writing, writing difficulties and the causes of writing problems. Writing is one of the principle dialect abilities. It assumes a noteworthy part in communicating one's thoughts, considerations suppositions, and states of mind. Through writing, individuals are fit for sharing thoughts, sentiments, convincing what's more, persuading others. Individuals may compose for individual pleasure or for some other reason. They may address a group of people of one individual or more people. The group of onlookers might be known or obscure.

Taking notes for study reasons for existing is a case of composing for one's self. Blogging freely is a case of composing for an obscure gathering of people. A letter to a companion is a case of composing for a known gathering of people. one's gather

There are many motivations to incorporate writing in a moment or outside dialect syllabus. One imperative reason is that: composing helps learners learn. It helps them have an opportunity to experience with the dialect, to go past what they have realized (Reimes, 1993).Hedge (1988: p. 5) likewise expresses that a great arrangement of writing in the English dialect classroom is embraced as a guide to learning; for case, to unite the learning of new structures or vocabulary or to help understudies remember new things of dialect. In this specific situation, composing enables understudies to see their improvement and get input from the educator, and furthermore enables instructors to screen understudies and analyze issues experienced. This demonstrates composing assumes a dominating part in dialect learning. Nonetheless ,contrasted with discourse, viable composition requires various things: a high level of association in the advancement of thoughts and data; a high level of exactness so that there is no uncertainty of importance; the utilization of complex syntactic gadgets for center and accentuation; and a watchful decision of vocabulary, syntactic examples, and sentence structures to make a style which is proper to the topic and the eventual readers (Hedge, 1988).

The Importance of the Study and its Aims

The importance of this study is related to the trial of detecting the difficulties which confront students in learning the skills of writing against or comparing them to the difficulties that face the teachers in teaching these skills, from the points of view of students and teachers as well. According to the trial, it is necessary to understand the extent of similarities and differences which are related to the point of view, and to the trial itself in order to discover suitable solutions or proposals that can improve the standard of learning and teaching the skills of writing in this university.

The Problem of the Study

The lecturers in the University of Salahaddin are complaining continuously from the students' weakness, particularly the weaknesses related to the skills of writing in English in a correct syntax, along with the making Ideas connection correctly and meaningfully, ideas themselves are arranged clearly, and concentrating on the orders (syntax) etc...

It is considered clearly in what the students create from articles, specialists, and exams in the subjects (educational programs) that requires to write in English language, accordingly. The students seem to be unable to express their Ideas obviously in a written form as a result of that, the students will get low marks (scores) in the written subjects. Thus, the problem gets prominent clearly in the following questions: What are the difficulties that the students face in learning the skill of writing and the teachers face in their teaching writing skill?

The Questions of the Study

This study aims definitely to answer the following questions:

1- What are the difficulties that face the students of Salahaddin University in learning the skills of writing in English from their point of view?
2- What are the difficulties that face the teachers of Salahaddin University in teaching the skills of writing in English from their point of view?
3- How can we compare the answers of the students and teachers to reach better results in teaching the skills of writing?

Within the answers of the above mentioned questions, the researcher designed two questionnaires, one of them is addressed to the students and the other to the teachers.

The researcher showed and presented the two primary forms and figures to a group of (chosen) educational specialists in Salahaddin University to authenticate the right vocabularies, and the appropriateness of the measuring tools, to be guided by the specialists, after collecting the questioners' replies. The process of wording of the two questionnaires in their final image was performed and delivered it the students and teachers.

The Sample of the Study

This current sample includes all specialist teachers of writing in English in Salahaddin University of first semester 2015- 2016, the size of the sample (11-eleven teachers) - and the sample also embraces all new students (writing curriculum).

First semester 2015 / 2016, their size (number) 316 "male/ female students).

The Previous Studies

Several researchers see that, the skill of writing includes a creative process that needs to develop several skills, and that can produce a text in the form of an article, or in the form of a paragraph. Me Cuen and Winker (1990:pp.55-78) believe that the skill of writing has its circular or spiral nature as its perfection process necessitates starting, repeating and then to move by looking at the end and the introduction in sequence to make sure that the content (syntax), and the unity of the subject are appropriate (Massi, 2001:pp. 25-66).

A creative intellect in the linguistic patterns that aims to realize cognitive communication with the way of interaction between the reader, text and the writer.

In regard to the methods of teaching this skill, the discourse and tendency got various techniques of teaching, as Larsen- Freeman (1985:p.55) argues that the techniques of teaching and learning foreign languages has started to be centralized around (student- centered) instead of the teacher.

Moreover, there is another group which sees and thinks that the focus on product- centered deserves the interest in students' needs and their training on the logical and appropriate expressing for their feelings and thoughts necessitate that the instructor of this subject (Curriculum) tries to tend bias towards the emphasis on educating the ability of composing as (an entire procedure) which gives the understudies the sufficient time to arrange their thoughts and changing them.

Zugoul (1987:p.67) finds the same content, as he considers that the process of writing as a supplementing one that provides the student the leading role in establishing the written text and enables him to express his needs more obviously. Xiang (2004:p.245) finds in a study which has been conducted on Chinese students that, teaching writing within the way of self-monitoring) helps the students to express their ideas through the usage of the teacher's instructions (directions) and improve wording the ideas, ordering in the written text page.

White (2001:pp.62-69) declares that, the process of writing, is regarding a mental interaction between the writer and the language, for producing a written text that is characterized objectivity and respect the linguistic rules grammatical rules. Also, he points out that some factors that help in producing this text such as the way of collecting the ideas and wording them. Some Arab studies indicate clear and tangible weakness in learning the students of the English language department in general and in the skill of writing in particular.

This matter is concomitant to what the researchers have found within their teaching of the subjects of writing in the school and in the Jordanian universities. Abd Al Hak (1982:pp.22-56) supposes in his study that, there is a clear degradation in the level of Jordanian students in their language, and in the skills of writing in particular within his study and the analysis of spelling mistakes of the students.

Xughoul and Taminian (1984:28) find that, several linguistic errors, specifically, the field of vocabularies that the Jordanian students make in their talk or writing, in particular, make their writing lack the proper choice for the vocabularies.

Some researchers indicated also to the low linguistic abilities of the students in Jordan and in some Arab countries, especially in English attributes wholly to bad planning either in preparing curriculums or the exams, and skills (Suleiman, Xagol, 1983, 1987). In the level of

Salahaddin University (Al Shabeel-2001) conducted a study that aimed to detect the difficulties of learning English to the students of English Department.

The review presumed that, there is a reasonable shortcoming in all abilities of the English dialect. The consequences of Al Shabeel (2001:p.44) consented to what specified by Al Rabiey (2004:p.33) inside the proof that focuses out the shortcoming of taking in the English dialect as a rule for the understudies of the Jordanian schools for the most part.

In a study conducted by Rabiey (2004:p.97) in the Department of English students at Salahaddin University in order to know the skills of English that the students need in their university study as they found it as the writing skills importance one.

On the level of foreign studies, some researchers indicated that, the Arab students produce English text that carries inside it odd patterns; they are affected by their mother's language (Kroll, 1990:p.79). Some of them show that the Arab student's writing in English lacks the concept of paragraph arrangement (Aly, 2004:pp.32-55). So, it has got clear from revising the previous studies that the skill of writing is considered an important skill of the English language, in particular in the University education stage.

The current study

In this study, the researcher tackles a survey samples for English language learners' students in their different academic stages, in college of Education/ Sallahaddin University. All these procedures are approved their goals managed it for, by means of holding the students to do test; which is concerned with the essential core of the present study. Another test is prepared for the faculty members of English language teachers, regarding their achievements in learning and teaching beside the difficulties which hinder the process itself.

Throughout an intensive and thorough discussion and analyses of the gathered data in the practical and experimental period, it appears so many difficulties which are enlisted within tables which are going to be displayed below.

The Two Studies Results:

It is important to note that, the two researches that gathered and examined the two samples clearly, and determining it as a method to extend their abilities and lie on it, in order to show that, there is an

extraordinary endorsement between the showing staff in the English office and the students' significance of the English language, specifically, the challenges of composing expertise in learning and showing contrasting whatever remains of alternate abilities of the other skills of language.

Table (1)

The first table shows the difficulties order for the skills of English language related to learning.

The order according to the difficulty of learning

Sequence	Skill	Student's Number	Percentage
1-	Writing	118	37%
2-	Conversation	112	35%
3-	Listening (phonics)	72	23%
4-	Reading	14	5%

While the second table **(Table 2)** indicates the order of teaching staff for the skills of English language related to the difficulty of teaching

Sequence	Skill	Student's Number	Percentage
1-	Writing	7	64%
2-	Conversation	4	36%
3-	Listening (phonics)	-	0 %
4-	Reading	-	0 %

Within the comparison we notice the complete conformity of the two tables between the teachers and the students in believing that writing skill is the most difficult in learning and teaching process.

But to the students or teachers, the ordering process is formulated in the form of particles of (sub-skills) which are related to the difficulty of teaching and learning its clear in the following table:

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Table (3)

Meanwhile, the third one illustrates the students' order for the sub-skills related to the difficulty of learning it.

Sequence	Partial Skill	Student's Number	Percentage
1-	Grammar	137	43%
2-	Vocabularies	137	43%
3-	Writing techniques	116	37 %
4-	Dictations	111	35 %
5-	Punctuation	109	34%
6-	Collecting Ideas	101	32%
7-	Subject Planning	77	24%
8-	Writing Draft	64	20%
9-	Joining Words	62	19%
10-	Ideas Connection	60	18%
11-	Final writing for the subject	41	13%
12-	Examining and Revising	28	9%

The teaching staff has ordered (arranged) these particles according to the different skills, related to its teaching difficulty for the students as in the following table:

Table (4)

Sequence	Partial Skill	Student's Number	Percentage
1-	Grammar		77%
2-	Writing Draft		70%
3-	Ideas Connection		69 %
4-	Punctuation		66 %
5-	Writing techniques		64%
6-	Final writing for the subject		60%
7-	Exams checking & Revising		60%
8-	Joining Words		58%

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9-	Subject Planning		57%
10-	Vocabularies		57%
11-	Collecting Ideas		52%
12-	Dictations		49%

It is clarified from the comparison of the two tables that there is a clear difference between the opinions of the students and the opinions of the teachers in regard to the difficulty of teaching / learning writing skills. Although there is matching between the two parties that Grammar is considered as the most difficult of the skills, either in teaching or in learning writing skills, it is believed that the students consider the process of learning vocabularies writing techniques at the second level / related to its difficulty, as the teachers see and think that teaching writing of draft, Ideas connections are more difficult than teaching vocabularies and writing techniques.

The differences between the two parties are increasing in descending on the difficulties ladder as the students expect or realize that the final writing of the subject and revising it, is considered as a less difficult in the process of learning, in addition to that, the teachers believe that collecting Ideas before starting writing and dictation, is considered as a less difficult (task) to learn.

It is possible to say that the diversity in the points of view in ordering the skills related to the difficulty isn't logical as what the student see it difficult during the process of learning, the teacher must see it difficult during the process of teaching, too. Is it sensible that the students thinks that its exceptionally hard to learn, as the educator thinks that its simple in instructing, the instructor's inclination that one of the abilities constitutes a trouble to him during the time spent instructing qualities that, the understudy discovers trouble in learning it, if the understudy thinks that its simple to take in, the educator won't think that its troublesome during the time spent instructing.

As a trial from him to highlight the sides of composing educating and its strategies for the conclusions of the instructor were known for the reason inside the survey that makes the way toward composing and educating as most troublesome and pointless one.

The reasons are mentioned in the table no. (5) Below:

Table (5): shows the reasons that lead to the low level of writing learning from the teachers' point of view

Table (5)

Order (sequence)	Reason	Percentage
1-	Grade size (great) number of students	100%
2-	Little of time available for feeding back to students	82%
3-	Littele of time dedicated for training	73%
4-	Less of subjects dedicated for teaching skill of writing	64%
5-	Teaching Methods	55%
6-	Set books and methodology	18%

As the students put order for these reasons which include different degrees of importance comparing the teachers' order.

Table (6)

Shows the main reasons lurking behind the results of the lowering level of the students related to writing from their point of views.

Order (sequence)	Reason	Percentage
1-	Less of time dedicated for training	45%
2-	Set books and curriculums	34%
3-	Less of time available for feeding back to students	33%
4-	Little subjects dedicated for teaching skill of writing	30%
5-	Teaching Methods	24%
6-	Size of great grade.	23%

On questioning the teachers about the possibility performing of some developments and improvements in the field of teaching writing skills to obtain better results, the answers were mentioned in table No (7).

Table (7)

The means of developing these skills of writing from teachers' point of view.

Order	Method	Answers

(sequence)		Percentage
1-	Writing groups set books	73%
2-	Individual Teaching	45%
3-	Usage of computer	36%

In regard to the student's performance in writing skills, they have ordered the methods of the teachers, table (8) illustrates the following:

Table (8)

Order (sequence)	Method	Answers Percentage
1-	Writing groups (set books)	49%
2-	Usage of computer	39%
3-	Individual Teaching	18%

On a rapid comparing between tables (5, 6) which are related to the reasons of student's 3 weakness in the skill of writing, the study indicates clearly that, the teachers think that the great number of students in one grade is considered the basic reason in this weakness and this causes directly the little time available for the teacher in providing feeding back for the students, whereas the students think that the basic reason is attributed to the little availability of time for training and the bad used method- in regard to tables (7,8), the teachers and students approve using the method of writing group may contribute in developing teaching of this skill particularly. If we consider the increasing numbers of students in the grades what we have to point it out the belief of the students that using computer is at the second position in ordering concerning the methods of development (table 8) as the teachers classify it at the third degree (table 7).

This may be due to the development of the awareness and the knowledge of the students by means of the use of computer, comparing to the knowledge of their teachers and this may need a research from another kind.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study illustrates that writing skill in English language, is considered as one the most important skills for the students of English language department in Salahaddin University. Also, it illustrates that either the students or teachers admit the general weakness for the

students' level related to this skill. It is assured by other studies which are conducted on the students of Salahaddin University previously (see Al Zoaabi- 2004, El Shebeel 2001, and El Alami 2004). While this current study answered its questions clearly and accurately, and it showed that there were a group of difficulties that the students face in learning the skills of writing, as well as, they ordered them from their point of view according to their importance and are related to the difficulties of teaching of this skill from the teacher's point of view.

The two researchers made comparison between the two points of view as a stand point to the extent of similarity and dissimilarity between them, according to the finding results of the study and its inputs, the researcher recommends the following:

1. It is necessary to develop the methods of teaching writing and move from the traditional methods to the ways and means that are more effective as the usage of writing groups and computer programs.

2. Much focus is put on figuring out how to indicate accurately the sentence structure existed inside the tongue which is going with the methodologies that are portrayed as a more feasible. Hence, the understudies must pass adequately under two subjects which are related to their semantic use before recording composing subjects.

3. To direct more learns about contrast inside aptitudes with a specific end goal to demonstrate the reasons of contrasts in the perspectives amongst instructors and students.

   In the light of these findings a number of recommendations can be made:

   1. Learners of English language should read a lot. Reading will help them increase their knowledge of vocabulary, grammatical structures, and be informed; to have knowledge of the world as well.

   2. Free writing practice is a good exercise for improving one's writing ability. Writing is a skill and therefore it is learned by practice just like any other skill.

   3. Note taking is also very helpful in enhancing the way writers generate ideas.

   4. Learners should not panic. Everyone experiences writer's block sometimes. They should be encouraged to go through writer's block and break it .This will help them be more imaginative and creative writers.

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