# **Diffcultes Faced By Basic Education College**

# **Students In Essay Writing**

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#### Abasctrat:

An ensayo analítico o de interpretación, preparado como un texto corto en prosa que generalmente trata su tema desde un punto de vista limitado o personal. Una razón por la que los estudiantes usan el ensayo universitario es la percepción 10 en la integración de influencias, el pensamiento y la expresión, para enriquecer las vidas de los estudiantes al brindarles nuevas herramientas para procesar la información de la experiencia y aumentar su autopercepción y la conciencia mental, yEl objetivo del estudio es clasificar e identificar las dificultades que enfrentan los estudiantes universitarios de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) al escribir un ensayo en inglés. Los estudiantes del departamento de inglés en la tercera etapa de educación básica universitaria Basrah University are involved in this stuck.

To achieve the aim of the study, a narrative and descriptive essay writing test is to asses the student ability to produce a correct connected piece of writing in English language and to find out writing difficulties which prevent the students from producing correct Inglish essay.

The test in its final version has been given to a sample of (26) EFF college students at the university of Basrah. Errors are classified. identified. and computed in percentage. The obtained results have revealed the following types of difficulties.

#### **Grammatical Difficultes Of Narrative And Descriptivee Essay**

a-Misuse of conductions	2733%	20.43%
b- Misuse of tense	16.0%	13.40%
c- Shift of tense	13.34%	10.05%
d- Misuse of article	32.86%	11.72%
e- Misuse of preposition	9.64%	12.06%
f-Subject-verb agreement	6.75%	13.40%
h-Number (singular and plura	l) 7.23%	10.5%
g-Word in wrong number	6.75%	8.87%
2- Lxical Difficultes Of Narrati	ive And Desc	criptivee Essay
a- Misuse of words	40.4%	22.6%
b- Wordiness	22.45%	20.10%
c- Translation	17.66%	17.58%
d- Separate words	10.47%	8.98%
e- Join words	18.84%	20.85%
3-Mecanical Difficultes Of Nar	rative And I	Descriptivee Essay Spelling

# 1- Vowel29.70%23.14%2- Inversion the vowel digraph (ie, ei)19.80%22.62%3- Doubling of letters17.32%27.14%4- Addition17.32%16.14%(cd)15.84%10.86%

#### **Puncnation**

1- Misuse of commas	17.24%	16.77%
2- Omission	17.24%	17.45%
3- Misuse of semicolons	17.24%	13.24%

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4- Misuse of capitals	17.25%	13.24%
5- Omission of quotation marks	13.29%	16.77%

In the light of the obtained result, some conclusions have been

## **The Problem**

Writing English language means the ability to use the structure, the words and their conventional representation, in an ordinary matter of foreign writing (Lado, 196 1:249).

It is necessary for the students to have command of mechanism of language, i.e. how sentences are joined together to form a paragraph, and how paragraphs are arranged to constitute a whole text about a chosen topic without his understand the learners fail to construct. correct sentences or a coherent essay, no matter how significantly or vitally the idea expressed in the same way the learners fail to produce presentable piece of essay If they have little information vocabulary to conveyor if they have short weak, thought about the theme they are lacking, no matter how well they master the forms and structures of language, therefore, the essential requirements for the essay activity are language and ideas (compbell, 1961;122).

Likewise, the actual writing convention which is necessary for the students to master relate chiefly to punctuation and spelling, punctuation is necessary to avoid ambiguity, to prevent misreading, or to make the meaning clear without punctuation, the written work looks like a jumbled mass of words. Therefore, it is very essential in English writing to make the text easier to read (Warriner, et al. 1959:184).

According to spelling, it is a very important factor in writing. The main purpose of spelling is to enable readers to gain meaning from what is written (Strick lard, 1957: 368).

Punctuation and spelling as well as language and ideas are essential requirements for the essay writing. We can say that

when a student has mastered these requirements. he knows how to write a foreign language, in other words the integrated process of writing such as punctuation spelling, structure and vocabulary leads a student, to produce a connected piece of writing in a foreign language.

In the field of English language teaching in Basic Education College, one of the teacher's major tasks is to train (his) her students to write coherent passages about chosen topics in a correct language. In other words, this training aims are guiding the learners to express their feeling thoughts about a chosen topic, in correct, intelligible, and effective writing This continuous training goes on for two years, that is to say, second stage and third stage students have been obliged to produce good pieces of essay in correct language because they have lessons weak for both composition and comprehension teaching on the contrary the students' writing at the third year are apparently suffering from so many defects in form and content of language being used most students paper emphasis certain deficiencies and disintegration may specify students' writing difficulties.

The problem lies that most students ability is weak and still. very in force to knowledge and control of foreign language. Therefore, the researcher tries to classify those difficulties in her study, thus, the need arises to carry out a scientific study of the problem to arrive at conclusions that may help to overcome the points of deficiency and designation of the English department at Basic Education College students in writing essay by setting suitable remedial pedagogical solutions.

## Aim of the study

This study aims at:

Identifying and classifying the difficulties students in essay English writing faced by basic education college students in essay English writing.

## **Limits of the Study**

This study is limited to:

The sample of the subject of this study is limited to the students of third year of English department of basic education college at the university of Basrah for the academic year 2003-2004.

## **Procedures**

To verify the aims this study the following procedures are

followed:

1- Selecting a sample of learners drawn from the third stage of the English departments of the basic education college at university of Bsarah.

2- Constructing a diagnostic test for this purpose.

# The subjects

To achieve the purpose of the study. All the students of third stage in English departments of Basic Education College at Basrah university are the subjects of the study, this means that the original population of the study included(26)male and female students.

The researcher selected two topics for writing essay writing, the first topic narrative [a story happened in the past and how it happened) (Alexander, 1972: 15) or the second topie is descriptive (making the reader as vividly aware as possible of what the writer has perceived through his senses to give him "feel "of things the

described through out presenting the characteristic of the concerned objects, person, condition and action) (ibid: 18).

The test aims at assessing and classifying the difficulties facing students third stage in the English department at University of Basarh in writing correct English essay.

Table (1)

## Structure Of The Essay

#### **<u>1- Introduction</u>**

Paragraph I. Set of scene

(who, What, where, when)

#### 2- Main body

Paragraph 2-3-4 Develop the essay

(describe incidents leading up to the main event and the event itself in

detail describes people, place, motions, actions, ect.)

#### **3-conclusion**

Final paragraph End the essay (complete the plot, describe feelings.

Reactions, explain the sequences)

(Evans, 2202:38; sesnan, 2000: 133)

## The Narrative Paragraph

The aim of the narrative paragraph is to leamm:

1- writing skill, that is to say (to organize ideas using chorlogical development. to write topic sentences with a strong controlling idea, to manipulate supporting sentences, to convey an attitude,

to increase coherence through adverbial clauses of tome and sequence.

2- reading skill is to read and reflect on writers' personal experiences and discoveries about themselves.

3- language as grammar is (to learn adverbial of time and sequence, preposition in time expression, adverbial clauses of time, and simple past vs. past progressive and past perfect tense(Smalley et al, 2000:36).

Table (2)

Students' Errors in the Narrative Essay

No.	Grammar 40	Vocababuy 30	Spelling 20	Punctuation 10	Finat marks 100
1	25	12	8	5	50
2	28	13	8	6	55
3	18	9	5	3	35
4	20	10	5	5	40
5	25	15	8	7	55
6	15	12	8	5	40
7	25	15	14	6	60
8	25	12	8	5	50
9	25	15	6	4	50
10	28	15	10	7	60
11	25	17	10	8	60
12	28	13	8	6	55
13	30	18	6	6	60

14	28	15	10	7	60
15	25	17	10	8	60
16	17	10	4	4	35
17	14	8	2	1	25
18	25	14	10	7	56
19	22	8	5	5	40
20	25	12	7	6	50
21	25	12	7	8	52
22	25	15	14	6	60
23	28	13	8	6	55
24	25	12	8	5	50
25	18	9	5	3	35
26	28	13	8	6	55
Total	622	334	202	145	1303

The Descriptive Paragraph

The aim of the descriptive paragraph is to learn:

1- writing skill, i.e. to organize and write paragraphs, describe place and people, to organize ideas using spatial organization, to use modifiers, to make detail vivid and specific, to increase coherence by using adverbials of place and adjective clauses.

2- reading skill is to read and discuss descriptions of people and places, to comprehend the details of a description, including the sounds, smells, sights, and feelings associated with a person or place.

3-language as grammar is to learn adverbs of place, adjectives. prepositions as adjective, passive vs. active voice, adjective clauses (Smalley et al, 2000:54).

#### Table (3)

Na	Grammar	Vocabukary 30	Spelling 20	Punchastics 10	Final marks 100
1	25	15	5	5	50
2	30	18	6	6	60
3	20	15	6	3	44
4	20	17	6	5	48
5	22	25	5	6	58
6	25	8	4	3	40
7	18	30	7	6	61
8	20	12	12	6	50
9	20	12	12	8	52
10	30	18	8	6	62
11	31	18	6	5	60
12	28	13	8	6	55
13	25	15	14	9	63
14	25	15	14	6	60
15	27	17	15	6	65
16	17	10	4	4	35
17	12	10	4	2	28
18	20	12	5	4	41
19	18	14	8	9	49
20	27	15	17	5	64
21	25	12	8	5	50
22	30	15	14	7	66

Students' Errors in the Descriptive Essay

23	17	10	5	4	36
24	20	20	10	9	59
25	20	20	10	8	58
26	25	12	8	6	51
Total	597	398	221	149	1365

## The Scoring Scheme of the Test

The test consists of two subjects of essay. Each subject should be 100-150 words. The first one is descriptive, the second is narrative. Each word in the essay is marked as either correct or incorrect. An incorrect word is given one point, so the full mark 100. Concerning the text they are incomplete, that is, they are not involved 100 words by the testes, their shortcoming arc considered wrong and given zero.

## **Statistical Means**

The following statistical means are used by the researcher in order to achieve the objectives of the study.

1- Percentage: this method has found out the percentage for each of difficulties.

2- Cooper Formula: it has been used to find out the judgment reliability coefficient.

 $\text{Cooper} = \frac{A}{X100}$ 

A+D

A-frequency of constancy between two observers.

D-frequency of inconstancy between two observers.

(AL-Mufti, 1984:63)

#### **Analysis of Results**

In order to fulfill the aim of the study the researcher based on error analysis since the purpose of error analysis is to describe and explain errors committed by the learners of foreign language while speaking the language or writing and, it is a very important method used by teachers, researchers to know the difficulties and problems faced by the Basic Education College students in the course of their learning the foreign language, it reveals for the letter the area of difficulties where the leamers need more careful explanation and guidance (Etherton, 1977: 68).

Thus, it is used to have a tool to discover the difficulties faced by student their written English. Table (4) shows the percentage of errors made by Basic Education College in written English essay.

Table (4)

The Percentages of Errors in College of Basic Education of the English Department in Essay Writing

Categories of difficulties	Percentages			
Grammatical	Narrative	662	47.73%	
difficulties	Descriptive	597	43.73%	
Lexical	Narrative	334	25.63%	
difficulties	Descriptive	398	29.15%	
	Narrative	202	15.50%	

 Table (4)

 The Percentages of Errors in College of Basic

 Education of the English Department in Essay Writing

Spelling	Narrative	202	15.50%
Punctuation	Narrative	235	16.19%
difficulties	Descriptive	149	10%
	Narrative	1303	99.99%
	Descriptive	1365	99.99%

#### Classification of difficulties of Narrative

1- grammatical difficulties	622	47.73%	
2- lexical difficulties	334	25.63%	
3- mechanical difficulties	347	26.63%	
a- spelling	202	15.50%	
b- punctuation	145	11.12%	
	1303	99.98%	

The difficulties of narrative essay can be classified as follows:

1- grammatical difficulties	622	47.73%
a- conjunctions	170	27.33%
b- misuse of tense	100	-
c- shift in tense	83	13.34%
d- articles	80	12.86%
e- preposition	60	9.64%
f- subject-verb agreement	42	6.75%
g- number (singular and plural)	45	7.23%
h- words in wrong number	42	6.75%
		99.98%
2- lexical difficulties	334	25.63%
a- misuse of words	135	40.4%
b- wordiness	75	22.45%

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c- translation	59	17.66%	
d- separate word	35	10.47%	
e-join words	32	8.98%	_
		99.98%	
3- mecanical difficulties	347	25.63%	
1- spelling	202	15.50%	
a- vowel	60	29.70%	
b- nversion	40	19.80%	
c- doubling	35	17.32%	
d- addition ei	35	17.32%	
addition ed	32	15.84%	
		99.98%	
2- punctuation	145	11.12%	
a- misuse of comma	25	17.12%	
b- omission of commas	25	17.25%	
c- misuse of semicolons	25	17.25%	
d- misuse of capitals	25	17.25%	
e- wrong hyphenation	25	17.25%	
f- omission of quotation marks	20	13.29%	
99.5%			
Classification of difficulties of De	<u>scriptive</u>		
1- grammatical difficulties	597	43.73%	
2- lexical difficulties	398	29.15%	
3- mechanical difficulties	370	27.10%	
a- spelling	221	16.19%	

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b- punctuation	149	10.09%
	1365	99.98%
The difficulties of descriptive ess	ay can be classifie	d as follows:
1- grammatical difficulties	597	43.75%
a-conjunction	122	20.45%
b- misuse of tense	80	13.40%
c-shift in tense	60	10.05%
d- misuse of article	70	11.72%
e- subject-verb agreement	80	13.40%
f- preposition	72	12.06%
g- number (plural or singular)	60	10.05%
h- word in wrong order	53	8.87%
		99.5%
2- lexical difficulties	398	29.15%
a- misuse of words	90	22.6%
b- wordiness	80	20.10%
c- translation	70	17.58%
d- sperate words	75	18.84%
e-join words	83	20.85%
		99.97%
3- mechanical difficulties	370	27.10%
1- spelling	221	16.19%
a- vowel	51	23.07%
b-nversion	50	19.80%
c- doubling	60	27.14%

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d- addition ei	30	13.57%
e- addition ed	30	13.57%
		100%
2- punctuation	149	10.9%
a- misuse of comma	25	16.77%
b- omission of commas	26	17.4%
e- misuse of semicolons	30	20.13%
l- misuse of capitals	23	15.43%
e- wrong hyphenation	20	13.42%
- omission of quotation marks	23	16.77%
		99.79%

#### Analysis and Results

#### **Grammatical difficulties**

#### **1-Coniuction:**

Analysis of data revealed that the total number of errors amounts to 170 with a percentage 27.33%, the average number of conjunction errors in written essay is high since the certain rules used in the correct form. are not.

#### Some errors in this respect are

1-We saw the city. So we left.

2-My neighbour whose is slightly eccent ric.

#### **<u>2- Misuse of English Tense</u>**

A large number of the students made errors in misuse of English tense, amount to 100 with a percentage 16,0%.

The data showed that basic education college students used the present simple verb instead of simple past tense in writing narrative essay, the students failed to choose the correct tense in correct position. Some of these errors are;

1-When I enter the education of college of maysan

2-My first day at college has many events.

#### **3-Shift of Tense**

The students made errors in shift in tense amounts 83,1 with a percentage of 13.34% the meaning of the sentence obscure, as a result that a shift in grammatical structure of a sentence result in a sort in consistency, the students should use either past or present tense in a sentence consistently, what has been noticed is that they change from past to present or vice-versa.

Some of these errors are:

#### They ate and they goes to my room

#### I <u>want</u> and <u>I finished</u> my studying.

#### **4-Misuse of Articles**

The errors in articles are about 70.80 with 13.68% the student s failed to select the correct use of definite or indefinite articles in the conect position. This due to the interference of their native language and lack of practice is the reason for committing these errors are:

1-A English people

- 2.....and had been taken to an hospital.
- 5- preposition

The errors of prepositions are (60) with a percentage 9.64% the data revealed that a lot of errors were made by students in using English prepositions, the reason behind this translation from the native language into English, .i.e. the interference of the native language produces un acceptable English, preposition.

#### Some errors made in the use of prepositions.

- 1-lt was on June.
- 2- when I joined to the college

#### 6- Number (plural or singular wrong)

The data of plural or singular wrong are about 45 errors with percentage 7.23% most students fail to use (s) plural with countable or uncountable noun with agreement use of 3 singular person tense.

1-The informations are,

- 2-These books has many.....
- 3-Everybody in life have the aim.....

4- one of these things are

## **Mechanical difficulties**

# 1-Punctuation

The analysis of students errors reveals that they have made its errors with 11.12% i.c., they have paid inadequate ideas of the English punctuation and they have little attention to the punctuation marks. The students make a lot of errors in punctuation when they write English essay.

It has been found out that students performance in the following marks (the period, the apostrophe, and the question marks is less than other marks (comma, the semicolon. capitals, the quotation marks, the colon and the exclamation marks).

This indicates that the letter are more difficult than former.

1 -Title like	* the old man	"The Old Man"
I - I ILIE IIKE	" the old man	

2-The books.....

3-It has enjoyment because the teacher achieves in job.

# 2-Spelling

The total number of incorrect spelling amounts to 202 .errors with a percentage of 15,20% when examining more than other errors it was noticed that the errors in spelling were more than other errors. Words in students native language are mostly written as are pronounced, but this is not obvious in English or thrography. English words are not always written in the way they are pronounced nor are they always pronounced

the way they are written.

## Some of these errors are:

I and my freinds

I prefer to enter this collage

## Vocabulary

The total number of incorrect choice of vocabulary amounts to 433 with a percentage of/25,63.53% the ability to write a foreign language presupposes a knowledge of the lexical units of the language, in this sense, a lexical unit is a word or a group of words possessing a specific meaning, just as on word may have different meaning in different contexts. So, may that word represent several lexical units (Valetle, 1976:223).

A lot of errors made by the students in the use of vocabulary have been founds in their essay in both topics. (descriptive and narrative).

## **Discussion of Results**

The results of this study show that first, students of college of basic education are deficient in essay writing. This may be attributed to many factors such as their weakness in reading comprehension, clarity, coherence, style, organization and language as (grammar punctuation and poor vocabulary etc.) Which may cause many difficulties in essay writing, second, the percentage of errors indicate that the areas of grammar, vocabulary take high percentages of errors made by EFL college students in essay writing.

# **Conclusion**

The achievement of Basic Education Collage students in skill of writing is not real progression taking place in their writing English; although these students have spent four years of studying English they still commit serious errors

when they write English.

Most of the essays in English language will not ask the students to advise their own theories, but to understand and apply other people's terms and ideas and to arrive at their own assessment of them What is original is how students interpret the ideas, or how to apply them, or they critique of these ideas they therefore be judged on how well they have done these things. The students need, first of all, to identify what kind of essay the students have been asked to write; to analyze or describe a phenomenon to discuss or evaluate a theory, approach, or finding to argue for a against a theory or approach, to apply a theory or approach to a particular situation. It is simply not acceptable to put down all students about a topic. theyPlan their essay, so that only what is needed is put down. The difficulties faced by basic education college student can be stated in the following:

<u>1- Clarity, coherence and organization</u> The students must plan and write their essays so that their instructors can understand their points clearly, this mean the students have clear language, and explain any claim they make. It is important that the instructors should group their main points at the end of students essays. To help the lecturers, the students should say what the point of their essays are in introduction and conclusion of their essays. The students can also help the instructors alone by using appropriate connectors like however, similarly, on the other hand to show how their sub points are related.

<u>2- Language</u>, the students should check their essays for errors in grammar and punctuation, and for any lack of clarity in expression, in particular, and the students may pay attention to:

<u>a- Tense:</u> use the present tense refer to arguments and theories <u>advocated by someone</u> who is already dead (e.g Saussure

makes a distinction between langue" and "parole") Use (the past tense only when there is good reason to do soleg, describing the procedure of an experiment describing historical events, (e.g. the Normans invaded Britain in 1 066).

**<u>b- Concert:</u>** make sure that there is subject -verb agreement.

<u>**c- punctuation:**</u> when students, cites words term and foun, they should be set apart somehow e.g. use inverted commas or underlining or italics.

**<u>d-Spelling</u>**: basic education college students have not gained a full command of spelling this is due to the written form which would accurately and systematically reflect the spoken forms. Although the fact of English graphic forms bear little relation to the uttered sound.

**Style and tone:** good style is important; the students need to put down their ideas effectively: pay attention to their sentence structure and their choice of words. If in doubt.do consult a dictionary. Most essay topics also encourage the students to give an opinion. There is no need to write ("I think" or in my opinion. because we assume as much there is no general prohibition of (he use of the first persons singular, but many students are understandably humble. Aim at a modest, but firm tone.

## **Recommend ation**

In order to improve EFL college students in writing essay and enable them to overcome the difficulties they face, the following points are recommended:

1-EFL college students should be how to formulate and organize their thoughts systematically and effectively in order to enable them to achieve effective written text.

2-Attention should be given to teaching pronunciation since pronunciation is essential to good spelling.

3-EFL college students need extensive and intensive training in writing

English Essay.

4-Emphasis should be given to the punctuation marks specially those that have been found in students' exam papers.

5- The use of capital letters is to emphasize certain words and to convey correct meaning on the written page.

6- Vocabulary should be given special attention students essay writing must use an appropriate vocabulary or word instead of a phrase or clause or even sentence.

## **Suggistions For Further studies**

The following studies are suggested in order to follow up the present work:

1- Evaluating the instructional course for teaching essay writing to be taught to EFL college students in order to find its effectiveness.

2- Investigating the appropriate techniques used for teaching essay writing to college students.

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المفتي ( ١٩٨٤) سلوك التدريسي مؤسسة الخليج العربي

## Appendix (1)

#### The Test

Write two essays on two of the following each essay should include 150-200 words Supply punctuation marks where they are needed in miressay:

- 1- My first day at college
- 2- The important events in your job.

## Appendix (2)

## Suggestion Weekly Lessen Plan

## **<u>Picture Prompt Objective</u>**

The student will be able to write a three paragraph story in a given time frame about a picture that includes a beginning, middle, and end, the student will also be able to pro write, draft, and edit.

## **Materials**

picture prompt printable worksheet paper pencil for each student)

## **Procedures**

• After handing out materials discuss with students the importance of pre-writing (to get all ideas in order):

• Set up graphic organizer with three boxes or circles on the chalkboard and tell students that each one represents a paragraph, let the students know that a good story will always have a beginning, middle and an end,

• Each paragraph should consist of at least 5 sentences. help students create ideas and place words inside the graphic organizer created on the chalkboard.

• One idea for a picture prompt is to have the students look at the picture and in the first paragraph include what happened leading up to this picture.

• In the second paragraph have them explain what is happing now.

• In the third, have them explain what happen in the future picture prompt This is known as the past present and future picture prompt essay. Another way of doing an

essay is using the word "SPACE" where each letter stands for a word so the student know what will should be include in their paragraphs.

SPACE stands for the following:

<u>S-Setting</u> (examples: Who is in the story?, When is it taking place? Where is it taking place?) this is your first paragraph.

**<u>P- Problem</u>** (What kind of problem is happening?)

A- Action (What course of action is taken to solve the problem ?). The PA"

<u>**C- Conclusion**</u> should be included in your second paragraph What is happening now? and why is it happening? your conclusion should be your final paragraph and your opinions and life experiences can and should be included.

**<u>E-Emotion</u>** (All paragraphs should include emotion, feeling adjective words to help your story flow.