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The Reasons behind Writing Problems for Jordanian Secondary Students 2010-2011

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Abstract

Jordanian students in the secondary schools face difficulties while writing English language. These problems arise because the students are not adequately familiar with English language and they do not have enough practice of it. This article highlights the main reasons behind the problems of writing and recommends some solutions to overcome them in the Jordanian classrooms. The skill of writing is one of the four skills of English language which must be taken into consideration and not neglected.

Introduction

Writing in a foreign or second language is a courageous experience especially for students whose native language is not of the same origin as the target language. Arabic-speaking students learning English is a good example here. These students are faced with the school curriculum that includes the four main skills of English language. Among these skills, they find writing skill the most difficult one and face many problems while composing simple short paragraphs.

Writing in general is the least lovable skill to Arabic-speaking students and this can be contributed to the fact that successful learning of the writing skill depends on the success learners have with the learning of other skills. Normal teaching programs adopt the natural order of listening, speaking, reading and writing in their teaching schedule. Even though writing comes as the last skill, it can't be neglected and needs a lot of attention from the teacher and the student because it is necessary in daily academic life. Students are expected to learn how to be good writers. If they can't write correctly and logically using appropriate language and style, life will be difficult for them not only at school but in adult life, too (Neville, 1988).

The Objective of This Study



The objective of this study is to show that the roles of the teachers and the students go side by side when it comes to mastering writing problems which many high school students face in the public schools in Jordan. The problems they face could be as a result of the lack of knowledge in English language such as not being able build up adequate vocabulary. It is also due to the reason that the students do not know how to write words, phrases, and sentences. They may also not be good at all in all the skills of the language. They may face a lot of native language interference or they may lack motivation.

Writing gives the opportunity to the students to be adventurous with the language, to take the risk and to go further of what is learned to talk about (Shouman, 2002, p.1). The teachers of English language who teach in high schools are aware of the difficulties involved in the process of learning how to master the different types of writing tasks and how to produce fairly coherent, accurate, meaningful and proper composition by high school students.

Problems Spring from the Inadequate Training and Skills of the Teachers

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The problem springs from the teachers themselves because they are second language learners of English and face and have faced similar conditions toward writing as students do. So, some teachers will only focus on errors and ignore the strategies of how to compose simple short paragraphs as a result of the lack of knowledge of the second language.

Writing skill offers a way of communicating one's thought and feelings on paper. So the message must be loud and clear between the teacher and the students. According to (Clifford, 1991, p.42), "The teacher has to encourage learners to write for communication. They should focus on the ideas and meanings they wish to convey rather than on mechanics of writing, such as spelling, and handwriting." The teachers play an important role in teaching writing and they are the only ones who could help prevent problems of writing that could slow the process of learning English, specifically writing. It can be done by encouraging students to write to communicate student to student, student to teacher, or student to foreigner.

I hope that this short paper will benefit many English teachers to identify the problems that should be avoided while teaching. This may give teachers the chance to help and lead the students to be better writers in the future using the foreign language with the least possible obstacles and to develop a deepened understanding of the delightful skill of writing.

Related Literature

Writing is a form of communication where the writer has normally someone other than himself or herself to whom he or she intends to communicate. If the writers cannot convey the message, then there will be no communication. According to (Reid, 1994), "shared knowledge" (p.2) helps communication. Arabic-speaking students should develop an understanding of this basic requirement (the knowledge that there must be common understanding between the writer and the reader) when they attempt writing in English. The awareness of who the audience is and for what purpose the task is being done can help writing and help become successful writers. Arabic-speaking intermediate students lack the control over their writing in English because they are in the process of gaining data as much as possible from the teacher in the early stages of learning a foreign language. Even the teachers of English need guidance while writing.

Freedom and Control

According to Brumfit (1984), free writing gives the students the chance to express their own thoughts and construct accurate forms with the direction from the teacher. I definitely have the same opinion because with supervision from the teachers, students will produce accurate forms despite the problems of spelling, punctuation and organization which give the students the chance to express freely and obviously what they aim to state. It is also indicated by Brumfit & Johnson (1991, p.136) that "Students can express themselves in a natural way in response to a real need." The students' need to communicate in English second language situation will help them to accomplish a combination of many incongruent grammatical and lexical elements in a form of coherent masterpiece of their own. The problem with combination is to find the right

grouping of “freedom and control” (Brumfit & Johnson, 1991, p.136). Enough control to guarantee that the students’ writing does not collapse into a bunch of mistakes, and enough freedom for the students to work out their own decision and learn something as an alternative of simply copying. The Arabic-speaking students need that freedom and control by the teacher in order to be certain that the written form is proper and acceptable English.

Teachers’ Role

According to (Shouman, 2002), the teacher’s role is to persuade the students to think how best to convey what he or she wants to say and to feel responsible. Encouragement gives students the feeling that they could be trusted for what they put on papers. Also encouragement gives students the confidence that they can learn to monitor and self-correct own errors to improve their overall accuracy. Teachers feel unsure of themselves when confronted with giving suggestion on students’ writing (Digest, 1996, p.3). This supports the idea that teachers who do not get enough practice for writing approaches will not be able to give any advice to students to improve the styles of writing. Pinsent (1992, p.99) asks that we “Encourage students to write and look at what they produce.” This will help students to talk about what they have written since speaking precedes writing.

The role of the teacher is to encourage the students’ work and let them keep on writing, no matter how the output is. “What the student needs is to be able to write correctly so that he or she is not afraid to put words on paper because of apprehension that the text may be couched in non-literary language,” (Neville, 1988, p.43). The teachers should backup students for whatever is presented. But this does not always work when students present unacceptable English. What teachers can do is to politely not accept the work with some comments on the weakness. They should not express 100% total dissatisfaction but, in an indirect way, point to the problems to be prevented in the future so that no hard feelings toward students expressed, making them depressed.

A knowledgeable teacher always finds ways to keep the students eager to write by providing topics of interest and yet related to the school curriculum. “Topics to be given to the students to write about are pre-selected by the teacher and should have some relationship to their English curriculum. Students will be able to write more, and more effectively, on topics that relate to their linguistic and social background and are within their semantic repertoire,” (Smadi, 1986, p.35). The topics that are brought live to students will always give results that have never been expected. Teachers need to allow students to take a different role each time composing a written form. The role that is practiced by students will give them a chance of creativity and countless more ideas for writing (Runkle, 1988, p.55).

Student Preparation

If students know that real people will read what they are writing, then writing often comes much easier. The students must understand that interested people other than the teacher will read their

works. So, it will not be only just a matter of completing the assignment. This will make students committed to what they have to present in the most appropriate way to decide what to say and how to say it (Leki, 1991). Knowing that real people will be reading their text for the purpose of cooperating in an act of communication will lead them to write in a responsible way. The real people could be from the same class, other sections of the same class or English teachers in the same school. “Parents or other adults speaking children's first language can also be invited into the class to work with groups of children,” (Pinsent, 1992, p.99). Students will, then, recognize the writing act as a purposeful performance.



There are two conditions which contribute to better writing skills (Mallett & Newsome, 1977, p.166):

1. The writer must come to see that what he writes is seriously received by the reader. This happens if the writing is a genuine communication.
2. Each act of writing should enable the writer to know more about what he thinks, feels, or supposes. If these two conditions are to be met, the writing task offers an invitation to tell, explore or state, and suggest a real purpose, rather than an exercise or mere practice.

The aim of writing is to communicate the thoughts and actions on paper. “Writing is basically a process of communicating something on paper to an audience. If the writer has nothing to say, writing will not occur,” (Oluwadiya, 1992, p. 12).

Prewriting

Prewriting activities offer students with something to say. It can create ideas, promote a free run of thought and help students to find out both what they want to say and how to say it on paper. Such activities can be done in pairs, groups or individuals effort. Some examples of prewriting activities: brainstorming, debating, interviewing, use of pictures, outlining, lecturing or oral reading.

Most of these prewriting activities can be successfully taught from the elementary to graduate-school levels. It can be done efficiently by guiding the students through each activity in the

classroom. Students should also understand that prewriting activities are not only for starting writing but they will be used over and over again when the actual writing is done.

According to (Spack, 1984, p.656), “Prewriting techniques teach students to write down their ideas quickly in raw form, without undue concern about surface errors and form. This practice helps their fluency, as they are able to think and write at the same time, rather than think and then write.” The job of the teacher again is to take their students through the prewriting stage of writing procedure if they are to improve students’ writing aptitude in schools.

Other Difficulties Faced by Foreign Language Learners

Second or foreign language learners of English will face a lot of obstacles. They will be able to produce sentences which may be grammatically correct but will not sound English because of mother tongue interference. According to (Walters, 1983, p.18), “A student’s writing may be grammatically correct, but unacceptable because of interference from the native language in style, usage, or arrangement of ideas.”

Teacher and Student Involvement



Since there are differences between the native language and the foreign language, the teacher who teaches writing should find ways to overcome these differences. These differences in grammatical structure, lexical items, and metaphorical patterns cause students numerous problems as they impose themselves their own language structure and conventions usage on the target language. The teacher role is to be familiar with the different techniques and try to use the one that will help students to avoid transferring the structure of their native language to the target language.

It is natural when teachers ask their students to write a composition without any previous ideas about the target language, the students have no choice but to do their writing according to similar concepts of the native language. It is a difficult task for the teacher who is also a second language learner too, but he or she must learn to teach how to write in an appropriate and acceptable way. According to (Walters, 1983, p.18), “There is a no win-win situation for both teacher and student. The teacher can avoid it, to some extent, by taking care not to put his students in situations where they have no recourse except to use their native language.” As a

teacher of writing, he or she needs to be extra careful to lead the task of writing in a smooth and acceptable way in order for students to be enthusiastic for going on with the process of writing.

Description of the Field Work

Writing is a way of communicating between the writer and the reader for the message to go through. The writer is always the student and the reader is the English teacher. Writing is not an easy task and requires a lot of practice and training to produce a well accepted written form in a foreign or second language. Being an English teacher for about fifteen years, it gave me the honor to work with Jordanian students in Al-Mazar District. Through my experience, I discovered that students do not feel happy when the writing lesson comes by. They rather take and use any language skill but not writing. I am an admirer of writing and that's why I encourage my students to write, no matter what the result will be especially for beginners. Since writing is a difficult skill and problems occur while writing, most students do not feel excited to write. I decided to search and find the main problems behind weak writing.



My fieldwork concerns all the students in seventh grade in our public high schools but, especially the seventh graders in Al- Jafariah Comprehensive School for Girls. This is the first time I teach the seventh grade. When I gave them the writing lesson after going through the procedure of writing and the different techniques, I asked them to go on and write on the given topic which was “MY IDEAL ROOM”.

When I went through the assignments submitted to correct them, I was astonished to read what was on their papers, which reflected a very weak way of composing English writing. From that moment I decided to do research to find out why the students of public schools face many problems while writing a simple short paragraph in English class. Problems they faced included the following: lack of knowledge of the language where students did not have enough build up of vocabulary to their level, inability to construct simple short sentences using the simple tense, inability to decide where to start and when to end, lack of any idea about the organization of a paragraph and lack of any interest in the topics they were asked to write about.

How Field Work was Conducted

The field work lasted for about two and a half months. Each time I entered the seventh grade class the lesson for the particular class period would be writing. I would go through the different techniques and styles in order for my students to appreciate writing and to make it part of their lives for so many years to come.

The first step that I followed for the field work was: I asked my seventh graders on October 20th, 2010 the first period, to write on one of the suggested topics, after asking them what topics they would be interested in. Students suggested many topics and some were like favorite animal, how to make the favorite sandwich, the closest person to your heart, and the favorite subject in school. They wrote the topics on the board and I asked them to choose one and to write individually for about 20 minutes with no helping ideas for the chosen topics.

After gathering the papers and grading them, I concluded from the students' writings that without any helping ideas for the suggested topics or any prewriting activities, most of the average students had nothing to say and gave me the paper with only the title of the topic. I also noticed that the good students wrote on the topics but with no appropriate development of the ideas. Then, I concluded that the students who were not given any prewriting activities for developing their thoughts would not be able to give the teacher any writing.



In the next step (second step) I wanted to test my conclusion that having some ideas would help students to write. I gave the same topics that were suggested by the students earlier and brainstormed some helping ideas, asking questions about who, where, when, why and so on and wrote all the details on the board for all the students to write on.



Working in Groups

Then I asked the students to work in groups of three of different levels for 15 minutes on October 24th, 2010, the fifth period. While the students were writing in groups, I watched and observed carefully by taking notes on how they are dealing with the topics. I noticed that my students were getting really involved with the topics. No group was staring and not doing anything. Everyone was busy with the required assignment. Clearly, this response was different the reaction I noticed earlier. They were now getting involved in writing. After finishing the assignments, I collected and graded the papers with some mistakes ignoring errors of spelling, and punctuation. As for the organization of the written product, I found that the main idea was developed based on what was given on the board but the major problem that kept recurring was the transfer of the mother tongue Arabic structure into the foreign language, which is English.

Some Sample Writing from Students

Some examples from students in Al- Jafariyah School writing which reflect the transfer of Arabic include the repetition of the conjunction and between words, phrases, and sentences whether the position requires the conjunction or not. This idea was mentioned by Al- Jarrah (1999) where he talks about the use of logical connectives in Arab students' writing in English, using the Arabic order: "the girl beautiful," rather than "the beautiful girl" to show the influence of Arabic in students' writing. Finally, students write as they pronounce words in Arabic, "juis" not "juice;," "nif" not "knife" and "sandwish" not "sandwich."

Meeting with Each Group to Discuss Their Problems

Then, I met with each group of students and discussed with them their problems. Pinsent (1992, p.99) suggests: "Talking to children individually about their work is time consuming but very necessary." I listened to why students think their writing is so weak. I was surprised by the response I got. This was the first time in the students' period of learning that they were confronted with assignments of writing a short simple paragraph which consisted of about five sentences.

Also, the groups mentioned that previous teachers did not focus on writing short paragraphs but gave exercises, which required a word or two to complete or answer the required questions. Some also indicated that English is not easy to understand, so how will it be enjoyable to write paragraphs? Others said that writing even in Arabic is difficult, how will it then be in the foreign language, and English is not the student's favorite subject? Some students also mentioned that whenever they write in English or even think to write, the Arabic language gets in their ways. I took their viewpoints and tried to see if what they said were based on real facts.

Continuous Work in Class

I kept on giving my students each week two periods of writing. One period would be for introducing the procedure and the techniques to follow while students write any short and simple paragraph. The second period would be to give lots of care and attention to the whole class to see that the message in their writing is clear and try to give them some freedom while writing: Freedom in the sense that they can choose a topic of their own, develop own supporting ideas within the main topic and choose their own ways to start and end.

Excessive Dependence on Teacher

I wanted the student to be in control but what happened was that they always insisted on my guidance for the steps to follow. If I gave students lots of freedom without me intervening when necessary, students would face many difficulties. Students could not be in control of their own writing because it was the students' first year to face writing tasks. Even though earlier grades insisted on the writing skill, my students were beginners in writing. I also discovered that students' weakness in English stems from the way the teachers taught: they simply treated the class period as passing time. If students were taught English the way the curriculum is designed, then the problems students faced in mastering English language and writing would be minimized. Students end up with knowing nothing even though they have been learning English from first grade.

Week after week I noticed that the whole class was learning something new because I was encouraging students' effort to improve their level of performance in English and this happened with lots of patience, confidence, and trust. I got satisfying results because I was enjoying what I was doing. The students were improving in the way they wrote. They developed a passion and interest in writing because of the encouragement I kept on providing them with.

Recognition and Rewards for the Best Writers

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I assigned a super-writer chart for the ones whose writing was acceptable, gave extra marks, stickers, small gifts like a pencil, pen, ruler or candy. I let these students to take class attendance for three days (and this is an act of recognition), and be the leaders of the class for one period by choosing any lovable activity she would like to take on. No matter how these things are small, they worked well with my students and each one put all her effort to give the best that could be given. As time passed I got better results than the first time and this was due to the way the writing tasks were introduced and explained to follow while composing a written forms. All the time the students needed help, guidance, support, and to trust themselves that they have special abilities to give something worth reading which gave results that were wonderful after hard work and the continuation of writing on the desired topics by the students.

Preparation of Surveys

At the same time I prepared surveys: one for teachers and another for students in seventh grade asking them about the problems of writing in public high schools in Al-Mazar District. This was distributed in ten schools, five for girls and five for boys. I gave the teachers' survey to the teachers who are teaching seventh grade (2009-2010) and also to the teachers who have taught seventh grade in previous years.

Administration of the Surveys in Schools

The survey elicited responses under five categories: strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree. The survey had the following questions for teachers:

1. What is your gender?
2. What is your education?
3. How old are you?
4. How many years have you been teaching English?
5. What grades are you teaching?
6. I encourage students to use aids when writing.
7. My students can not write English.
8. I correct all assignments for writing.
9. I do not give ideas about the raised topics.
10. Writing activities are a waste of time and effort.
11. I follow the fixed procedure for writing activities.
12. I force students to use the dictionary.
13. I discuss students' assignments in class.
14. My students can express themselves in writing.
15. I go step by step with students during the writing activity.
16. I do not let my students feel comfortable before doing an writing activity.
17. I assign all writing activities at home.
18. I always let students choose their favorite topic to write on.
19. I neglect the writing skill.

20. I discuss the topics before students begin writing.
21. The environment does not help to apply writing activities.
22. I use a *Super-chart* for excellent work in English writing.
23. I read all writing activities for students after correction.
24. I use topics from outside the curriculum.
25. I do not use the Teacher Book.
26. I follow the curriculum topics and I am bond to them.
27. I have lots of time to do the writing activity.
28. I do not return paper to students after correction.
29. I place students in pairs and groups to do special writing activity.
30. the English syllabus is not very long.
31. Students think in Arabic and write in English.
32. I do not have time to do all writing activities.
33. I do not use topics out of the curriculum.
34. I listen to students carefully when they raise any question.
35. I follow all the procedures for writing from Teacher's Book.
36. My students use any style they like while writing.
37. I encourage my students' writing.

The number of teachers who were requested to fill in the surveys was about thirty-five who had to answer thirty-two questions with reference to general information like gender, education, age, and years of experience. I also gave the same teachers of seventh grade three surveys. They were asked to give one to the excellent student, another to an average student and the third one for the low-achieving student. This was done to see if the students in the schools that got surveys faced the same problems as my students, or my students were the only ones who were weak in writing English in Al-Mazar District.

Administation of the Surveys to Students



After correcting the sample writings, I found out that the students of seventh grade in the public high schools were not at all good in writing composition. All the seventh graders were weak and had the same common problems as my seventh graders, such as lack of knowledge of the

language, mother tongue interference, and lack of motivation. The students' survey consisted of thirty questions and two for the English marks for earlier grades. The survey's questions for the students are:

1. What is your mark for 5th grade?
2. What is your mark for 6th grade?
3. I write all activities for all units in class.
4. I know how to write words.
5. I want to write but I can not.
6. I have problems in writing English.
7. I am not praised by my teacher when I write.
8. I want to learn to write.
9. I do not have a build-up of English vocabulary.
10. I translate from Arabic the words that I need for writing.
11. I know how to write short simple sentences.
12. I can not write at all.
13. I like to write at home.
14. I do not like the writing topics that are given to me.
15. I never use the **COURSE** when I write.
16. In English class, we do not take writing activities.
17. My teacher does not like my writings.
18. I do not write at all in English class.
19. I did not know how to write English from earlier grades.
20. I am not good at English.
21. I do not write because I do not know the English language.
22. I use a **COURSE** when I write.
23. I get help when I write.
24. I get extra-points when I write an excellent work.
25. I can not write without anyone's help.
26. I do not know how to form short simple sentences.
27. I write but I do not know my mistakes.
28. I make mistakes, I get punished.
29. I do my writing assignments but I never get them back.
30. I hate English lessons.
31. I like to write in classroom.
32. I like to use computer, dictionary, or other helping aids when I write.

The above questions are answered based on the range from strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, or to strongly disagree in English and was given to sixty-two students of seventh grade in all the ten schools including my own students in Al-Jafariyah Comprehensive School for Girls.

The questions were read to students one by one carefully so that students could answer the questions without any hesitation. I made sure that all the questions were understood to get the truth out of the answers and I gave the students' time in order to think and then decide on the most appropriate answer. Also I asked the chosen students to write four to six sentences on the

topic they preferred and to indicate their marks they obtained in their fifth and sixth grades in English language. This was done to have an idea of where the chosen samples stood in English in order to see if they faced problems or not in writing English. But three-fourth of the samples did not get any marks. So, I did not count the marks for any evaluation. I followed the procedure in all the schools that were chosen for the sample study. It took five days for about four to five hours a day for the distribution and the gathering of the surveys.

Evaluation of the Responses

After gathering the surveys, I placed the questions into variables giving each one a number for both surveys. The categories of strongly agree got two, the agree one, the undecided zero, the disagree category got minus one and the strongly disagree minus two for the students' and the teachers' surveys. Those numbers were entered and evaluated using the SPSS program. The results of students' survey were quite believable in the way it was answered with lots of care by the students. There were only two questions that received the standard deviation of lower than one and they were variables eight and ten. Those variables are found in the descriptive statistics in the appendices.

Generalizations

(Variable 8) indicates that students want to learn to write which received a standard deviation of (0.98). I imagine that this question got a lower than one because of the way students felt toward English learning. It may be also due to the fact that they did not get enough support. Or, they were not encouraged to try to take any risk. It is also possible that they thought writing was not important or had other things to worry about. This kind of question will need more study in order to get to the real reasons for that result. This question will support my proposition, which goes for lack of motivation. If students were provided with enough encouragement I think they would have wanted to learn all the skills of English language and especially the writing skill.

(Variable 10) does not support my hypothesis, which is the transferring of the mother tongue into the second language. The standard deviation was (0.95) where the students claimed that they did not use their Arabic language while writing English. I think this question needs more study because I am not satisfied with the result. But result presented here is based on the students' answers. The variables that got above one are also useful to defend my hypothesis. (Variable 19) indicates that students in earlier grades did not learn how to write from words to short paragraphs and the result was (1.50) which shows that teachers are to be blamed for what results we have of students of not being able to write well. It could be that teachers themselves are not motivated to teach in the most acceptable way, or they are not confident when it came to writing and that's why it is neglected and this will be proven in the analysis of the teachers' survey.

The problem could have started from the teachers and ended with students and it will go on if the problem is not tackled soon by those who are in authority.

(Variable 5) also attracts my attention. Students want to write but they do not know how to do it. This question resulted in (1.60), which indicates that they are willing to write but the problems lie on the way to do it and those who are responsible for the mess are the teachers. If students were shown ways how to write, I think the future will be full of great writers, and they would be able to translate and transfer our voices as far as possible.

Another important variable is (variable 28) where the teacher punishes students when they commit mistake(s), which got (1.51) to give a clue about the encouragement those students should get no matter how weak the writing they present. Their writing must not be dealt with sarcasm or with punishment for the mistakes. Students can be shown where they committed the mistakes and teachers could try to help them to prevent such mistakes in the future. The feeling that students get when they are punished is not helpful at all because it will decrease their enthusiasm to learn how to write. Teachers definitely do not want that behavior.

(Variable 7) also supports this point through the result of (1.25). The result indicates that teachers do not make their students feel proud. Also, students show that they do not like the topics that are suggested by the teacher or in the textbook. Response got (1.43) for (variable 14). This shows that students want to be in control of what topic to choose but the problem is that teachers are forced to follow the textbook. What teachers can do is to give similar conditions but change the topic and let students' choose the topic if the results are satisfying.

According to students, they think they can write better if it is done at home where they can get help in addition to the help from the teacher. This is proved by (variable 13) which got (1.36), (variable 25) which got (1.51), (variable 31) which got (1.56), and (variable 32) which got (1.33). These variables indicate that students are always eager to get help either in classroom or outside classroom to be able to write English properly, accurately and meaningfully. The most important (variable 21) got (1.27) which really supports my proposition of lack of knowledge of the language which leads the teacher to ignore the writing skill because the teacher is a second language learner like the students. (Variable 20) got (1.40), which indicates that if students are not good in English and lack the knowledge of the language, they cannot write English.

Teachers' Survey

As for the teachers' survey, most of the questions were lower than 1.00 which indicates that teachers should be taken into more consideration for next study. This also shows that teachers are the primary reason for existing problems in mastering writing. The most important (variable 7) got (0.61), which shows teachers were not convinced that their students faced problems in writing the answer. If what the teachers indicate is true, then writing English is easy to the students. But yearly results of the Twejhi exam prove the opposite where English always received the lowest percentage. Another proof which shows that this result is not acceptable is that students themselves admit that they do not know how to write English. Teachers are not sure about writing. They focus on other skills, which they find somehow easier such as grammar and reading. (Variable 19) got (1.24) and the result defends my proposition. (Variable 16), which deals with students not feeling sure of themselves while writing, got (1.01).

The teacher's survey included two questions (variables 26 and 33) which focus on the same idea but in two different styles. The results should be the same but were different where (variable 26) got (1.11) and (variable 33) got (1.22). This shows that teachers answered randomly without any care to understand the purpose behind such questions. As for (variable 36), it shows that students were not allowed to write in own styles which got (0.75). This question supports the idea of lack of motivation from teachers and was influenced on students. Also, (variable 37) presents the lack of encouragement by teachers on students work which got (0.74).

Another important (variable 35) shows that teachers who went step by step in any writing task got the result of (0.85). This indicates that students were not introduced to prewriting activities. Finally, the responses for (variable 24) received (1.29). This revealed that students showed high interest in topics from outside the curriculum. (Variable 9) received only (0.83). This shows that teachers did not give background ideas for the topics. The standard deviation is under one because the question was in the negative form. This question proves that my hypothesis that teachers lacked the knowledge of not using prewriting activities is not accurate. I notice after going through the results of data that writing poses the greatest problem to students.

Conclusion

Writing helps us to express our thoughts and feelings on paper in order for the reader to see through the writer. However, schools in Al-Mazar District have students that face real problems in writing mainly because they lack the knowledge of the language. Their teachers are also in the same boat. Teachers lack motivation to teach writing since their skill writing English is equally not impressive. Teachers are not adequately motivated to teach writing by those who are in charge of the program. Surprising, it seems that the interference of the mother tongue is not seen as a problem by the students as seen in their answers to the questions raised in their survey.

I conclude that through practice one could learn no matter what the conditions are and if the learner is willing to learn he or she will develop better skills and make a difference. Also, the sorrowful thing is that writing is neglected in schools by most of the teachers because they find it difficult. If writing is taken seriously by both the teachers and students, writing will be seen easier and full of excitement than any other skill. Writing skill allows one to think and express how he or she feels and gives the learner a privilege to be a king or queen in his or her writing.

I recommend for the one who is in authority to take these suggestions for real purposes.

Teachers should monitor students and give diagnostic tests at the beginning of each year of study to see where students have any problems. Decisions can be taken as to what to do next, in order to help individuals or groups of students. Also all attempts by students are praised and encouragement is given endlessly to the students. The teachers of English should provide students with a relaxing atmosphere and make them feel free to have a go at writing in order to display their skills and to work and share with other students from inside or outside the class. To help students to improve their writing, we need to give them extra periods for writing and provisions for this should be made in the weekly schedule. Another recommendation is to

provide students with CDs that teach them various methods of writing. Better competence and performance may be achieved in the foreign language by providing opportunities to use all the skills which lead the student to understand and use words, phrases, sentences, and then short paragraphs. Students should show responsibility and patience toward writing even though the progress is slow. But one day they will get good results and be good writers.

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Appendices

Teacher's Survey Results:

Variables	Results
1	-----
2	-----
3	-----
4	-----
5	-----
6	1.07
7	0.61
8	1.21
9	0.83
10	1.05
11	0.73
12	0.93
13	0.89
14	0.53
15	0.75
16	1.01
17	0.89
18	0.64
19	1.24
20	0.91
21	1.08
22	0.61
23	0.84
24	1.29
25	0.76
26	1.11
27	1.07
28	0.93
29	1.21
30	0.86
31	0.59
32	1.18

33	1.22
34	0.90
35	0.85
36	0.75
37	0.74

Students Survey Results:

Variables	Results
1	-----
2	-----
3	1.21
4	1.02
5	1.60
6	1.57
7	1.25
8	0.98
9	1.60
10	0.95
11	1.34
12	1.05
13	1.36
14	1.43
15	1.09
16	1.37
17	1.66
18	1.87
19	1.50
20	1.40
21	1.27
22	1.79
23	1.01
24	1.09
25	1.51
26	1.78
27	1.86
28	1.51
29	1.83
30	1.34
31	1.56
32	1.33

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