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Common Errors in the Basic Writing Skill with Reference to Native Speakers of Arabic Students in Collegiate Level

Dr. Kesavan Vadakalur Elumalai & Dr. Roseline Nirmala Jesudas

Common Problems of Writing Skill

A number of studies have been examined in the field of English Productive Skills to pinpoint the common problems of students' writing skill. Writing is not only a mirror of one's thought but it contributes newness to established information (Weigle, 2002). Brooks and Grundy (1998) define writing as a tool to communicate ideas in a target language. Hyland (2003) considers writing as a visual print coherently knitted into structured language. The writing skill course focuses on switch from simple sentence writing to more complex and stylish explanation were prepared according to the direct quotations and in-text citation. In general, the writing skills courses are intended to provide students with the composition/essays and grammar/vocabulary skills. These skills were essential that to explore to the freshmen in the collegiate. Tarnopolsky

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(2005) advocated that academic writing is the most creative writing which needs critical thinking to develop ideas in the target language. Fujioka (2001) surveyed how Asian ESL students acquired academic writing skills. She found Asian students lack critical thinking rather than the lexical problems in writing. Another researcher Izzo (2001) also reported that Japanese students at university level lack organizational feature in their academic writing and these difficulties were due to their translating habit from Japanese to English language in their writing discourses (Hirose, 1998).

Writing Skill in English in Arab Countries

In Arab countries, several authors have viewed the weaknesses of Arabic students that reflected in foreign language writing as a major cause for their failure to reach the set goals of writing. Al Khuweileh & Al Shoumali, 2000; Al Hazmi & Schofield 2007; Fitze & Glasgow, 2009, El Sadig (2010) advocated that the old educational policies were the main factors for students' problems. It has been realized that students of EFL classes were unable to adopt a professional style of writing. Silva, 1992 expressed essay writing from first draft to final draft is a stressful task for nonnative learners. These problems led several other authors to suggest that academic writing needs to be more focused on the organization part of the discourse (Hirayanagi, 1998; Takaji, 2001).

Practical Problems

Cherednichenko (2003) believed a diverse composition of learners created practical problems for both teachers and learners. It is not an easy composition to deal with since most classes have students of two or more levels of ability and to cater to the needs of everyone is a challenge for teachers. Bauer and Shea (1999) viewed increased problems in multi-ability classes when both native speakers and beginners studied together. Diversity led to engagement and management problem on both ends. They further suggested different methods to solve the problems in writing skills classes still many other aspects were left to be explored.

The Focus of This Study

The present study explored the performance and the problems of Arab students from collegiate education having private and public school background attending EFL writing courses in the college both Arts & Education.

This article found several challenges for the success of the program, such as shaping suitable teaching materials and resources, assigning peer group work, evaluating students' attitude and identifying their difference in the level of understanding. The issues related to performance problem in the productive skills in writing classes are examined.

Nature of Writing Skill

Writing is one the hardest skills which has the following micro skills

Correct use of

- Orthography
- Form of words
- Word order
- Appropriate genre and audience
- Sentence constituents (Concord)
- Cohesive devices and
- Differentiating main ideas and supporting ideas

Simple paragraph writing requires conscious effort and much practice in composing, developing, and analyzing ideas. Students writing in a second language are also faced with social and cognitive challenges related to second language acquisition. The language proficiency and competence underlies the ability to write in the second language in a fundamental way. Therefore the teacher who teaches Writing skill course should consider both strategy development and language skill development when working with students.

Performance of Students

When students lack skills in these areas, their writing may be unsatisfactory in multiple ways from poor grammar and syntax to unclear organization to weak reasoning and arguments. Complicating matters is the fact that many students' reading skills are also poor. For example, if they cannot recognize the main point of an argument in their reading, they obviously cannot respond to this point in their writing. In addition, students often lack the Meta cognitive skills to recognize the areas in which their prior knowledge and skills are insufficient – and thus which skills they need to work to improve.

During their high school careers, most of our students were not writing with the frequency we might expect, nor were they doing the types of writing that we will require of them in their college years.

Unsatisfactory Writing

When students lack skills in these areas, their writing may be unsatisfactory in multiple ways – from poor grammar and syntax to unclear organization to weak reasoning and arguments.

Moreover, students may have learned bad habits in high school that they need to un-learn. For example, some students were taught in high school to avoid the first person and thus may use awkward grammatical constructions to avoid it rather than learn the contexts when its use is appropriate.

Design a Suitable Program of Writing

Recognition of students' prior experience with writing and the complex nature of writing can help us to more effectively design assignments and provide support as students continue to hone their skills.

Each student should know about these micro skills and they should apply while they are performing writing process. This skill is an important part of communication. Writing exam is the main task for the preliminary level students they should communicate the content with clarity and ease to an evaluator.

For a foreign language learner, writing is an extension of listening and speaking. Therefore, the student must be provided opportunities to build, extend, and refine oral language in order to improve written output. Since writing involves some risk-taking, it is important for students to be comfortable taking risks. They need to know that their efforts are appreciated and that the message they are trying to convey is valued over the form.

Problems in Orthography: Spelling & Punctuation

To test the Writing skill the preparatory year students were asked to write a paragraph and found the following common mistakes in their writing.

Original Word form and spelling Reproduction / students' version

Original Word form and spelling	Reproduction / students' version
Pen	Ben
Principal	Brinciple
Right	Wright
Problem	Broblem
Taught	Taut /tauht
Rather	Reter/rather
Says	Saes/sais
Specific	Spissife/spafic
Limited	Limited
Acquire	Acuire
Language	Languge / langage
Happiness	Happinece
Course	couse
Person	Prison
Heels	Hiels
Answer	Answre
Service	Sevies
Children	Children
Tell /told	Telled/talled
Wakeup	Wickup
Cafeteria	Cafitariya
First	Frist
Mixed	Maxed
Excited	Exaited
Second	Seconde
Future	futuer
Eventually	Evantuly
Country	Countray
Combine	Combain
Fresh	freash

Examples of Student Writing

The following paragraphs present examples of errors for Spelling & Punctuation. Apart from the above mentioned common spelling mistakes, other spelling mistakes are also identified in the paragraphs.

Spelling alone is identified in the following paragraph. Grammar mechanisms were not highlighted.

Example: 1

Write an essay on Schools System in United States.

Example from students' Writing

Schools system at the United States

Schools in the united states is similar to the schools in the united kingdom, there are three graded schools chassified according to the age of the student primary, intermediate and secondary school. people usually attending school at the age of six, they must be physically and mentally mature to attend school. in the primary school there are one to six or seven levels, then student go to a higher schools (intermediate), finally he/she attend the last level which is secondary school hte primary schools usually has one teacher to teach every level, But in the intermediate and secondary classes taught by subject specialists, So the student spending about tewlve years in the schools unless he has to repeart one year or more, then he/she has the choice to countinue to has a diploma degree or not. The evaluation at the school in the american system depends on the team work. Of cours there is indivisual diffrence between the students some of them need to repeat to learn, The other can learn faster, the teacher has to be aware about these indivisual diffrences so he can be qualified to deal with the students.

Example: 2

This is my second essay talking about great leaders

king abduallah is a great leader for saudi arabia, because of his contributions in the education field; he built a new universities and institutes in saudi arabia and he brought a great professors around the world in saudi arabia, he encouraged the scientists and student for the learning and scientific researches. saudi arabia now is better than before because of him.

sheikh zaid also is a great leader for united arabic emirates because he made the dream come true, he turned dubai city from a desert into one of a great cities in the world.

Example: 3

Treat pets like a family member agree or disagree and why?

Treat pets like a family member agree or disagree and why?

Iam not a pets lover, i think some of them carry some dieseas iam not saying that people should not have pets but i would not do that. and i think if any one have any kind of pets they should have a fully care of them, they have feel the responsibility to them, because they took

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them with thier own choice in the first place. and take care of them in my opinion means give them their food in time, wash them, make a private place for them. but i disagree with treated them like family member because human and pets can not be the same they have so much diffrece people needs not like pets needs, people need to feel respect, safety, honor,,,,ets pets needs food, place, they do not feel respect like human. and i think there must be punishments for any one doesn't treat pets very well like they deserve to be treated.

Conclusion

The present study highlights the Native Arab students' errors in the writing skill. In accordance with the above findings, the following suggestions are made for the improvement of writing skill.

1. Teachers may apply the process writing approach.
2. The curriculum designers, teacher educators and material designers may focus on providing strategies based on using the process writing approach in EFL domain.

This study paves the way to investigate the effect of using other approaches in teaching writing skill.

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