

# Investigate the Reasons of EFL Students' Weakness in Writing, at Onaizah Colleges A case study in Onaizah Colleges, Onaizah, Saudi Arabia

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## Abstract

*Writing is an essential skill in English language. Even though this skill plays an important role on EFL students, students are unable to write the sentences correctly. Therefore, this study aims mainly to investigate the reasons of EFL Students weakness in writing. The sample is, 2<sup>nd</sup> year college students, Onaizah colleges, K.S.A. The researcher followed the quantitative method of research for this study. The researcher distributed a questionnaire to the EFL students to collect the data. The study found that the differences in the variables are in favor of all weaknesses which exist are in the time which is devoted to writing tasks in classes are so limited, and the student do not do any writing except that required by the lecturer. The study recommended that the EFL students should be exposed to variety of writing tasks outside the classrooms, and also students should be exposed to the lexical relations to broaden their vocabulary capacity, and they should be aware of the writing rules in order to enhance their writing skills.*

**Keywords:** EFL Students' Weakness in Writing, Onaizah Private Colleges

## Introduction:

Saudi Arabia has started to teach English language at the mid of the fiftieth of the last century. English language has been taught as a foreign language and second language at Saudi Universities and

colleges because it is the global language, and it is the language of modern technology and science.

This study aims mainly to investigate what are the reasons lie behind the weakness of EFL students in writing at university. Most students fail to pass the essay exams in Onaizah colleges. The problem seems to be complex when students graduated from colleges; they find it difficult to deal with writing English language when they get their jobs. English language became the main important factors for the graduates to get jobs. It is obvious that students of little ability in writing face so many problems in their study field; some of them may fail to accomplish their writing tasks.

Many current studies that have been conducted in Saudi Arabia show that most of Saudi students perceived that English is an important subject, and they are in an urgent need of mastering it in order to accomplish their works. However, they feel wholly incapable of the on-going English learning.

The importance of this study deals to investigate and analyze the problem and to find exact solution for it. The researcher choose the two year at Onaizah college to perform this study, because it is the year in which students are prepared to specialize in English language, and easier to deal with English skills problems at such stage.

English, like all languages, is full of problems for the EFL learners, especially in Arab countries. Some of these points are easy to explain. For instance, the composing of words to give sentences and the sentences which give a paragraph and a passage. These problems are trickier, and cause difficulty even for students at colleges and universities.

The other main problem of the EFL learners is misunderstanding, and misconception of the English terminologies which are needed in writing. The problems of vocabulary learning and grammatical features maybe are barriers to successful language competence.

Some EFL learners are frustrated when doing writing assignments. Writing in their native language is easier, compared to writing in English. The difficulties may be due to not knowing exactly what the words to be used are and how to use them. Another difficulty may be their uncertainty about the exam and the way to convey their thoughts accurately. As a result, the students find themselves using a small group of words over and over again. They rely on words which

they are comfortable with. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the reasons of EFL students' weakness in writing, and set up some solutions.

## **The Methods**

Methodology of this research depends upon which all of the study process. The researcher collected the data throughout the questionnaire. The questionnaire is created in writing skill, and it is used as survey for the EFL learners.

The study follows analytic descriptive method to achieve its objective. The researcher provides a clear questionnaire. It is a clear overview of the process. However, the survey account better the role of instruction in design, delivery, and revision. The questionnaire allows the EFL learners to determine their opinions towards writing skill which is typical to EFL students' need. It is used to investigate the composition course. It is also used to investigate the positive and negative role of the lecturers towards the writing skill process.

A sample was chosen from 2<sup>nd</sup> year Onaizah Colleges (male and female), Onaizah city. The study sample composed of twenty (20) EFL learners which most of them came from different social backgrounds.

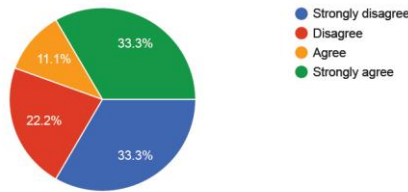
The aim of this research paper is to give clear reason why English writing declines on EFL learners in 2<sup>nd</sup> year at Onaizah Colleges. This study followed survey methods to achieve its aim.

Questionnaire results on all subjects has been handed, then the researcher analyzed the results by making graphs which enabled him to see the general tendency/outcome of the subject answers.

## **RESULTS**

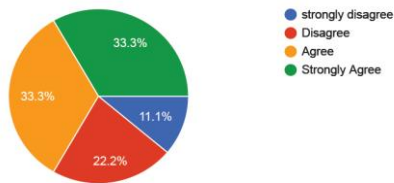
The researcher presented the results of the survey and explained the statistical significant differences between variables on the percentages and correlations for all variables of the Questionnaire. The researcher provided comments with setting the graphical presentations as explained below.

(Figure 1)



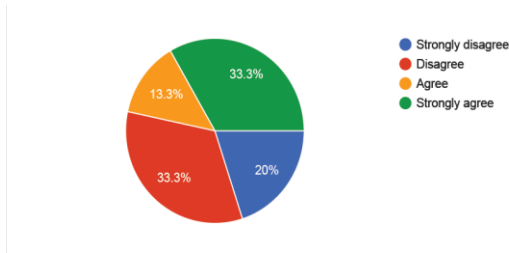
Results of the survey showed that Questionnaire Statement Number 1 which is I have no a clear idea of how can I start writing in English. *The* significant difference between participants' results in variable (1) on Questionnaire. Agree recorded the highest percentage which is 33.3% Therefore the significant difference in favor of agree that I have not a clear idea of how can I start writing in English due to the high of the percentages.

(Figure 2)



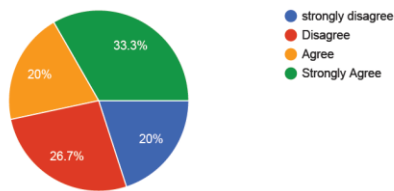
There is a significant difference between participants' results in variable (2) on Questionnaire, Statement No. 2 which is what I have studied at secondary stage does not help me to make a good sentence. Result showed that Strongly Agree has the highest percentage which is 33.3% and followed by Agree which is 33.3 %, that is 66.6% of the university students agree with "What I have studied at secondary stage does not help me to make a good sentence". With the percentage of 66.6% indicates statistically the significant difference in favor of agree that what the students have studied at secondary stage does not help them to make good sentences.

(Figure 3)



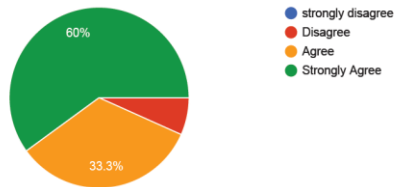
Study revealed that there is a significant difference between participants' results in variable (3) on questionnaire, Statement Number 3, i.e., My little vocabulary make me weak to write in English. The result showed that there is a high percentage for Agree and Strongly Agree which is 46.6% due to their little vocabulary. This indicates statistically the significant difference in favor of agree that their little vocabulary make me weak to write in English.

(Figure 4)



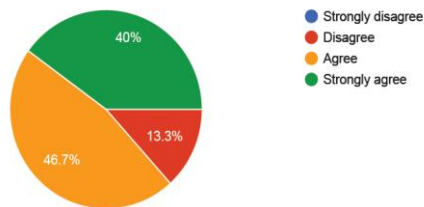
Based on statistics, Questionnaire statement number 4, i.e., University stage does not give students a chance to write about their own popular activities, revealed that there is a significant difference between participants' results in variable (4) on questionnaire. The result demonstrates that there is highest percentage for Strongly agree which is 33.3% and 20% for agree. Therefore, 53, % of the students' consensus agree that university stage does not give students a chance to write about their own popular activities. This consensus supports the study of EFL learners' weakness in writing English language.

(Figure 5)



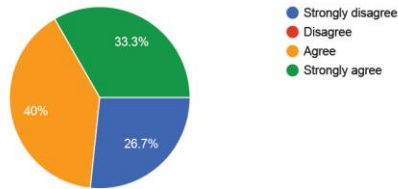
There is a gap between writing tasks in secondary school stage and University stage one which is Questionnaire Statement No. 5 has a high significant difference between participants' results in variable (5) on Questionnaire. Survey results revealed that 60% is recorded for Strongly Agree and 33.3% for Agree, thus, 83.3% of university students' consensus agree that There is a gap between writing tasks in secondary school stage and University stage one due to the fact that the There is a gap between writing tasks in secondary school stage and University stage one which lead to student's weakness in writing.

(Figure 6)



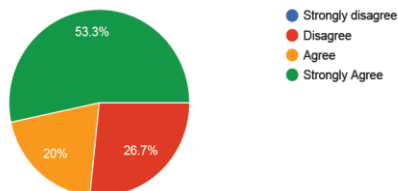
Results of the survey showed that Questionnaire Statement Number 6 which is all that students do at English classes is to follow a model set by the lecturer. *The* significant difference between participants' results in variable (6) on Questionnaire. Agree recorded the highest percentage which is 46.7% followed by Strongly Agree which 40%. Therefore, the significant difference in favor of agree that All that students do at English classes is to follow a model set by the lecturer due to the high of the percentages.

(Figure 7)



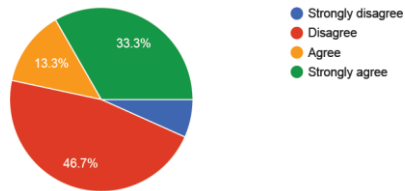
Based on statistics, Questionnaire statement number 7, i.e., I do not do any writing except that required by my lecturer, *the* result revealed that there is a significant difference between participants' results in variable (7) on questionnaire. The result demonstrates that there is highest percentage for agree which is 40% and 33.3% for disagree. Therefore, 73.3, % of the students' consensus agree that they do not do any writing except that required by their lecturers. Therefore, this consensus supports students' weakness in writing English language.

(Figure 8)



The time which is devoted to writing tasks in classes is so limited which is Questionnaire Statement No. 8 has a high significant difference between participants' results in variable (8) on Questionnaire. Survey results revealed that 53.3% is recorded for Strongly Agree and 20% for Agree, thus, 73.3% of university students' consensus agree that the time which is devoted to writing tasks in classes is so limited due to the fact that the EFL learners are devoted to writing tasks in classes is so limited which lead to student's weakness in writing.

(Figure 9)



Based on statistics, Questionnaire statement number 9, i.e., English book at colleges provides few topics that may help students to write in English, revealed that there is a significant difference between participants' results in variable (9) on questionnaire. The result demonstrated that there is highest percentage for disagree which is 46.7% whereas 33.3% for strongly agree and 13.3%. Therefore, 46.6, % of the students' consensus agree that English book at colleges provides few topics that may help students to write in English. Therefore, students feel they are weak in writing.

Referring to the questionnaire first open- ended question, which was: what are the problems you encounter when writing in English? The study subjects responded as follow: Their problems fall into:

- 1- Insufficient English vocabulary.
- 2- Insufficient reading practice which is helped in writing.
- 3- There is inconsistency in spelling.
- 4- There is little time devoted to writing skill tasks.
- 5- There is a lack of exposure to English writing outside the classrooms.

Concerning the second open- ended question which was: in your view, what are the important things that lecturer should do to help their EFL students to master writing in English? and learning English generally? The study subjects answers fall into the following:

- 1- Lecturers should help EFL learner how to build up their vocabulary.
- 2- Lecturers should talk in English all the time and give the students opportunity take notes.
- 3- Lecturers should draw more attention to writing skills.
- 4- Lecturers should practice to take-notes while delivering lectures to improve writing.



## DISCUSSION:

The preceding analysis suggests some characteristics and problems of English language among Saudi students at university stages. The EFL students did not seem to have much opportunity to write in English. Various reasons were noted, such as, the students did not have a clear idea of how they begin writing in English language, and their little vocabulary which was a result of poor writing was factor that impede them to begin successfully.

The main reasons of EFL learners' weakness in writing are: 1) Some of them are recorded what they have studied at secondary stage does not help them to make a good correct writing, and; 2) the little vocabulary which was a result of poor writing, was factor impede them to begin successfully.

Another reason is university stage does not give students a chance to write about their own popular activities, most articles at university are big not like accustomed at secondary schools.

Most of the respondents pointed clearly to the gap between the secondary and university syllabus. The respondents found it difficult to write a paragraph while they did not know how they build a simple sentence. So they felt frustrated and absurd to what they did. They forget that university stage is more different than secondary stages. Every individual student depends on himself/herself in writing.

Lack of exposure to writing outside the classroom, was a real problem impeded mastery over English. Most of the respondents believed that the time which is devoted to writing tasks in classrooms is limited and insufficient. There was a little awareness of importance of taking notes and jot down the main points of the lecture amongst students, most of the respondents agreed that nobody used to take notes or write outside except that is required by teachers.

Most of students follow model set of the lecturers which affect students' writing. The students do not give their best to write or think critically while expressing their own opinions. Notwithstanding, there are many writing tasks that need critical thinking and view their opinions, EFL students still follow and recite the model set of writing. Thus, the students writing is weak.

Another reason why university students are weak in writing is they do not do any writing except that required by lecturers. The

students rely most on teachers and they do not allocate time to write their own stories or daily events that they encounter. They forget the education process as soon as the lecture is finished. Therefore, time allotted for writing is limited. Also, university students are not encouraged by the teachers to express their views or thoughts or even exposed them on writing in and out of the classrooms. Thus, these are the detriments why students are weak in writing English.

It was clear that the time devoted to writing classes was so limited, therefore, it affects badly the progress of the students specifically the low abilities ones.

Despite the deep problems which faced Saudi students in trying to learn English, especially in writing, they show deep interest and understanding of the same. Most importantly, all the students showed awareness of the significance of communicating in English, particularly through writing.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Although most of Saudi EFL students at colleges and universities understand the importance of English as a global language that may help them to get good opportunities in future, the findings of this study indicates clearly that English language teaching and learning suffer most from structural defect. This declining needs serious treatment including all aspects of teaching English, syllabus and learners.

The lecturers should devote enough time to the EFL learners. They should draw great attention to teach the four skills, reading, writing, speaking and listening, in a balanced way. Lecturers should adopt an approach and work hard to raise EFL learners' ability through reading and trying to catch up the latest developments in the field of teaching English. In addition, they should encourage EFL learners to take notes while delivering the lectures. A much better pedagogical approach to teach English language is Communicate Language Teaching.

The advocates of this approach contend that activities that involve real communication promote learning activities in which language is used for carrying out meaningful tasks. This promotes learning language and it is meaningful to the learners and encourages

learning. The practice of note-taking is also shown to be quite effective in writing and not deficient.

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