**BOOK PROPOSAL for CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS**

*Title*

**Arab Students’ Writing in English at the College Level: Challenges and Remedies**

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Outline of proposal:

The general outline: p. 1-5

The contents: p. 5-7

Curriculum vitae: Separate document 8-9

**BOOK PROPOSAL, GENERAL OUTLINE**

* **Preface**

1. **Introduction**
   1. Linguistic background
   2. Cultural background
   3. Educational background
   4. Importance of English in Israel
2. **Sources of ESL/EFL Writing difficulties in general and to Arab students specifically**

2.1 Inter-language

2.2 Intra-language

3.3 Peculiarities of English as a target language

3.4 Contrastive analysis

3.5 Error analysis

**3**. **Types of errors at the sentence level**

3.1 Syntactic errors

3.2 Spelling errors

3.3 Semantic errors

**4. Errors at the paragraph level**

4.1 Topic sentences

4.2 Supporting details

4.3 Conclusions

4.4 Transition words

**5.** **Errors at the essay level**

5.1 Essay structures

*Introductory paragraphs & thesis statements*

*Body paragraphs*

*Concluding paragraphs*

5.2 Genres of essays

* 1. Coherence and cohesion

**6. Problems in developing academic texts for writing seminar papers**

6.1 Paraphrasing

6.2 Summarizing

6.3 Synthesizing

6.4 Producing coherent texts

**7. Cultural transfer**

7.1 Influence of Islam as the students' main religion

7.2 Influence of Arabic culture

7.3 Indirectness

7.4 Emotional appeal

7.5 Bi-polarity

7.6 Transmission of materials

7.7 Ornamental language

7.8 Repetition and exaggeration for the sake of persuasion

**8. Methods of teaching and evaluation**

8.1 Adopting the process approach

8.2 Providing feedback

8.3 Promoting reflective thinking as part of the evaluation process

8.3 Integrating technological tools for teaching and evaluation

**Appendix A**: Samples of students’ writing

∙ **Index**

∙ **References**

*Rationale for the book*

The proposed book addresses problems and challenges that Arab college students encounter in developing coherent texts in English as a target language. In general, writing is a difficult skill for native speakers and nonnative speakers alike because writers must balance multiple issues such as content, organization, purpose, audience, vocabulary, and mechanics in terms of punctuation, spelling, and capitalization. Writing is especially difficult for nonnative speakers because they are expected to produce written texts that demonstrate mastery of all the above elements in a new language. Writing in a second language is even more demanding because it is a complex, challenging, and difficult process, since writers are expected to produce written samples that are syntactically accurate, semantically acceptable, and culturally appropriate.

In this regard, Arab students are not an exception. They face many difficulties in academic writing, such as writing well-developed paragraphs, essays, and research papers in English poses a great challenge to them. The difficulties in writing well-developed texts in English at different levels for EFL learners are numerous and stem from different sources such as inter-language, referring to the first language, intra-language, relating to developmental errors, and the peculiarity of the target language (Abdulmoneim, 2000 and AbiSamra, 2003. Three factors affect Arab students’ difficulties in producing English texts: the linguistics and style of Arabic, their initial cultural interference, and prior educational experiences (Abu Rass, 2013; Ahmed, 2010; Qaddumi, 1995). Reviewing the literature of Arab students’ problems in writing in English in the Arab world show the commonality of these problems among Arab college wherever they live and study. For example, researchers who have investigated difficulties have encountered Arab students who are pursuing their graduate studies either in English-speaking countries or at academic institutions with English as the language of instruction in Malaysia have reported similar problems shared by these students. As an EFL writing instructor and researcher, I have noticed similar issues. My students tend to write long sentences, repeat themselves, use presentation and elaboration for purposes of persuasion, and use semantic and phonological parallelism (Al-Khatib, 2001; Almehmadi, 2012).

Arab learners of English in Israel share many challenges and difficulties with Arab students pursuing their studies either in Arab countries or locations where the language of instruction is English. However, Arab-Israeli students are unique in that they are members of an ethnic minority group in Israel, where English has a prestigious role, as is the case in many other countries. Besides being a lingua franca, English plays a major role in domains such as business, education, academia, and access to knowledge. Both Jews and Palestinians follow the same national EFL curriculum. However, two separate education systems operate in the country: one for Jews and one for non-Jews (Arabs), who constitute almost 20% of the population.

While English is the first foreign language for Jewish students, it is the fourth for their Arab counterparts. Arab pupils face a unique situation in learning English as a foreign language because they have already been challenged by acquiring colloquial Arabic prior to their formal education, classical Arabic starting from grade one at school, and Hebrew starting from second grade. Compounding the linguistic challenges are fundamental differences between traditional Arab education and current EFL pedagogy. Arab education is often based on transmission of material via frontal lectures, memorization, copying, and rote learning (Abu Rass, 2011 & Al-Haj, 1999). In contrast, current EFL pedagogy requires EFL teachers to be exposed to a variety of approaches, strategies, and techniques to teach the language effectively and help learners learn successfully (Richards & Farrell, 2011), who should be able to take risks implementing alternative models (Farr, 2010). In addition, until recently phonics was the dominant method for developing literacy among young Arab learners. On the contrary, the language methods implemented in Jewish schools have traditionally emphasized comprehension and self-expression. As a result of this situation, the proficiency level of Arab learners of English is significantly lower than that of the Jewish ones (Shohamy, 2014). Jewish students largely outperform Arab students on national and international tests (Keblawi, 2005). The low achievement of Arab students in these exams is attributed to implementing different educational policies in both sectors in terms of allocating budgets, and substandard materials and textbooks. It is possible to examine the Arab students’ level of English from several aspects, which describe the situation as grim and worrying.

The results of many research studies that have addressed Arab student writing in English either in the Arab world, in English-speaking , and in other foreign countries have been published in national and international journals. In contrast, systematic empirical research addressing Arab students’ challenges in writing in English in Israel is limited. Only very few articles on this issue have been published lately, permitting this book to address a unique situation.

*Level*

The book is of interest to researchers of ESL/EFL academic writing, writing instructors, ESL/EFL educators at the college level, policymakers, and undergraduate and graduate students. For researchers, it will provide insight into the errors made by Arab students in general, since 295 million Arabs live in 21 Arab countries. In addition, Arab ethnic minorities live in other countries in the Middle East, such as Turkey, Iran, and Israel. Reviewing the literature of Arab students’ problems in writing in English in the Arab world shows the commonality of these problems among Arab college students wherever they live and study. The book will also address the peculiar situation of Arabs in Israel as members of an ethnic minority group in Israel, which is different linguistically and culturally from the majority of the population in Israel and their culture. It will shed light on problems facing other minority groups in the world in terms of English education, mainly writing at the college level, addressing their needs and providing solutions.

The analysis of errors will provide writing instructors with a wide spectrum of background information about the sources of these errors, which consequently would help them to be aware of their errors, their sources and ways of correcting them. In addition, the detailed examples will acquaint teachers with types of errors they would encounter in the samples of their students. The book will be of interest also to ESL/EFL educators at the college level in general, which will help them understand the problems of their Arab students in writing their assignments in English.

Since the book will include all factors that influence the development of Arab students’ writing in English in Israel, it would provide policy makers with empirical knowledge so as to purposefully respond to calls to provide the necessary infrastructure and tools to help these students produce well-developed academic texts in English.

Graduate and undergraduate students will find the content useful, since it draws their attention to the types of errors they commit either consciously or subconsciously. The former includes errors made because of carelessness and the later reflects the errors that they are neither aware of nor of their sources. As a result, they would be able to correct themselves and further develop their writing skills. Graduate students will find it particularly useful as guidance for writing required seminar papers and theses at the master’s level.

*Extent*

The book will be approximately 40,000 to 50,000 words.

*Planning*

The book will be completed by the end of 2022.

**BOOK PROPOSAL, CONTENTS**

The preface briefly introduces the reader to the book. It provides some insight into why I’ve become interested in this field and information about the data, paying special attention to the subjects and others who have provided their support in writing this book.

Total: 1,000-2,000

Chapter 1 includes a literature review, which discusses writing difficulties that ESL and EFL university and college level learners of English face in general, citing sources from different parts of the world. It will also include specific difficulties that face Arab college learners who are majoring in English in their home countries and others pursuing their graduate studies in higher education institutes abroad (either in English-speaking countries or in other countries with English as a medium of instruction such as Malaysia). Sources of problems will be explained in detail to include inter-language, intra-language, the influence of the language and culture and prior educational experiences.

Total: 7,000-8,000 words

Chapter 2 focuses on errors and their types, following error analysis theory and practices. The analysis of all types of errors at the sentence level will be based on the literature review of error analysis, which is a technique for analyzing almost all errors made by the second language learners including those that result from the first language learning and others which are not related to the learners’ native language. It is also used as a technique to study learners’ errors since it provides data from which inferences about the language learning process can be made. It would help writing instructors and learners as well. The former would help them learn more about the complexity of the writing process of their learners, and the latter will assist the learners be consciously aware of their problems to overcome them. Housen and Pierrard (2005) believe that most Arab students’ errors result from performance mistakes, mother-tongue interference, or false intra-language analogy. Therefore, contrastive analysis which has been defined as “an inductive investigative approach based on the distinctive elements in a language” (Glossary of Linguistic Terms, 2004) is a relevant approach in this context. This analysis highlights the similarities and differences of sentence structure between two or more languages. It aims to use contrastive analysis to understand the transfer and shift from one language to another and to compare the foreign language with the native one in order to adopt methods and techniques to meet the needs of the individual student (Byram, 2000; Gass & Selinker, 2008).

Total: 6,500 – 7,000 words.

Chapter 3 focuses on linguistic errors at the sentence level that include syntactic as well as semantic errors. Syntactic errors include verb tenses, subject verb agreement, modal auxiliary, relative clauses, fragments (run on sentences - incomplete sentences) use of articles, prepositions, noun modifiers (The girls/ These girl…) and countable and uncountable nouns. Mechanical mistakes refer to spelling, capitalization and punctuation. Other examples include mistakes in consonant clusters, word order, questions and negatives, auxiliaries, pronouns, time, tense and aspect, modal verbs, articles, etc.

Chapter 4 presents errors related to paragraph development and unity. Usually Arab students face difficulties in composing topic sentences, supporting details and a conclusion since paragraph development is based on a complex series of parallel constructions, both positive and negative. In addition, compositions often lack organization of thoughts and appropriate linking of ideas, employing the right choice of transition words. In addition, wrapping up the content of their paragraphs by writing a conclusion poses another difficulty.

Total: 8,000-9,000

Chapter 5 will be dedicated to essay structure and development, where the emphasis will be on obstacles facing Arab students developing cohesive essays of different genres. Regarding structural errors, we are particularly interested in the introductory, body, and concluding paragraphs. Genres usually included expository, persuasive, compare and contrast and argumentative. Special attention will be paid to the difficulties in developing thesis statements in essays.

Total: 4,000-5,000

Chapter 6 includes challenges Arab students face and errors they make when writing short academic research papers in English in terms of summarizing information from texts, analyzing the content of articles and synthesizing information from different sources, in addition to syntactic and semantic errors.

3,000-4,000

Chapter 7 is dedicated to analyzing the influence of Arabic culture (which is based on Islam) on the writing of Arab students in terms of transferring their beliefs and modes of thinking. Arabic-speaking learners of English tend to transfer their modes and patterns of thinking in writing in English, addressing the same point two or three times from different angles. In contrast, English text is expected to be linear, coherent and concise (Sa'adeddin, 1989). The analysis of the effect of Arabic culture, which is based on the religion of Islam, will include the following categories: indirectness, emotional appeal, bi-polarity, transition of material, ornamental language, repetition and exaggeration for the sake of persuasion.

6,000-7000

Chapter 8 discusses writing instruction and evaluation in detail. It will include all steps in adopting the process approach, requiring learners to submit multiple drafts. A description of the process will include drafting in terms of writing and rewriting, revising and editing. The description will also include how integrating reading and writing, and news broadcasts for comprehensible input can help students improve their writing skills. This chapter will also include evaluation techniques and provision of feedback to help learners consciously improve their writing products. Special attention will be paid to employing technological tools for teaching and evaluating the writing samples of the students.

Executive Summary of Curriculum Vitae

**Dr. Ruwaida Abu-Rass**

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**Contacts\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

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**Academic Positions\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**2019–present** Program Coordinator: Accessing Higher Education to Arab Students, Beit Berl Academic College

**2010–present** UNESCO Chair in Multiculturalism in Teacher Training at the Academic College Beit Berl

**2008–2012** Head of the Forum of English Department Heads at the Colleges of Teacher Training in Israel, The MOFET Institute, Tel Aviv

**2004–2008** Head of the English Department, The Academic Arab Institute at Beit Berl Academic College

**Education\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Ph.D, English as a Second Language, (1992**–**1997), University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona, USA

M.A., Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL), (1989**–**1991), University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa, USA

B.Ed., Bachelor of Education & a Teaching Certificate in English as a Foreign Language

(1984**–**1988), Beit Berl College, Israel

Senior Teacher/EFL, from grades four through six (1978**–**1981), Beit Berl College, Israel

**Research Interests\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

* Writing development among Arab college students
* Issues related to teaching English as a Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL)
* Qualifying English teachers in the 21st century
* Multiculturalism in teacher education
* Minority education

**Teaching Interests\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

* Academic Written Proficiency
* Multiculturalism in Literature
* EFL Methodologies
* Didactic Seminar

**Publication Highlights**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* 15 articles in peer reviewed journals
* 6 contributions to/chapters in edited books
* 6 articles in non-reviewed journals

Three key publications relevant to the proposed book are:

Articles in Refereed Journals

Abu Rass, R. (2015). Challenges face Arab students in writing in English. *English Language Teaching,* 8 (10), 49–59.

Abu Rass, R. (2011). Cultural transfer as an obstacle for writing well in English: The case of Arabic speakers writing in English, *English Language Teaching, 4 (2)*, 206–212.

Abu Rass, R. (2001). Integrating reading and writing for effective language

Teaching, FORUM 39 (1), 30–34. <http://eca.state.gov/forum/vols/vol39/no1/pto.htm>

In progress:

Towards coherence: An analysis of theme in the writing of Arab EFL student writing