Chapter 1

Introduction

This book presents and addresses the problems and challenges faced by Arab college students in developing coherent texts in English as a target language. It is based on many years of experience teaching academic writing to Arab learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at the college level in Beit Berl College, Israel. The difficulties in writing well-developed texts in English at different levels are numerous and appear in different areas, such as composing sentences, paragraphs, essays, and academically acceptable seminar papers. While some problems arise from first language and cultural interference, others stem from a lack of exposure to authentic English. The examples provided in this book are drawn from data compiled over the last 25 years in the form of student submissions.

Reviewing the literature on global college students’ problems in writing in English shows that this population shares many of these problems with EFL college students elsewhere. In addition, they have a commonality with other Arab college students wherever they live and study. For example, researchers like Abdulkareem (2013) and Al-Zubaidi as well as Richards (2010) investigated difficulties encountered by Arab students pursuing their graduate studies either in English-speaking countries or in academic institutions that adopt English as a medium of instruction in Malaysia. These scholars reported similar problems to those I observed as a writing instructor and researcher.

Chapter 7 discusses the contribution of different researchers who investigated problems facing Arabic-speaking students in different Arab countries like Jordan (Al-Khatib, 2010, 2017); Egypt (Ahmed, 2010); Palestine (Mourtaga, 2004, 2010; Qaddumi & Walweel, 2018), and Saudi Arabia (Ababneh, 2017; Ahamed, 2016; Al-Mansour, 2015). They reported similar results indicating that difficulties faced by Arab students writing in English stem from three factors such as religion, first culture, and prior educational experiences. However, research that examines the writing of Arab students from Israel in English is scarce (Chaleila & Garra-Alloush, 2019). Therefore, the writing issues and problems addressed in this book could be very important for policymakers, educators, researchers, writing instructors, and students.

My extensive experience of teaching various levels of academic writing courses motivated me to write this book, with the intention of presenting and addressing the difficulties Arab college students face in producing well-developed cohesive texts in English as an international language. Advanced English competencies are essential for students’ personal, intellectual, professional, and academic success. Besides presenting the problems and difficulties, some of the content illustrates the linguistic and cultural factors behind these problems, aiming to stimulate academic and professional arguments. The book includes not only difficulties and research results but also recommendations.

To help readers understand the context of this study and the challenges that face this population in learning English, the following background information is provided.

1. Palestinian Arabs in Israel

Arabs in Israel are citizens of Israel and, at the same time, constitute a segment of the Palestinian nation, which is engaged in an ongoing conflict with Israel (Ali, 2013). Different labels are used to describe this community. For instance, Chaleila and Garra-Alloush (2019) refer to them as “Arab-Israeli students” (p. 120), while Amara (2014) employs the term “Israeli Palestinian students” (p. 105). The latest statistical population surveys show that there are 14 million Palestinian people: 5. 3 million in the West Bank and Gaza; 1.7 million Palestinian citizens of Israel (constituting approximately 20% of the total population); 6.2 million in Arab countries, and 750,000 living in foreign countries (Awad, 2022).

Palestinian citizens of Israel live in three geographical areas, the Galilee in the North, the Triangle in the center, and the Negev in the South. They are affiliated with three religions: Islam, Christianity, and Druze. Muslims constitute 85%, and the rest are Christians and Druze.

While the majority live in separate urban towns, communities, and small villages, some live in bi-cultural cities, where Arabs and Jews share public spaces. Nevertheless, there is almost no interaction between Arabs and Jews (Dubiner, 2010), and most Arab schoolchildren attend Arab schools. International human rights instruments define the status of Arabs in Israel as a national, ethnic, linguistic, and religious minority that is still highly marginalized and underrepresented (Adala, 2011). This marginalization manifests in every aspect of life, including EFL education. Israel has a centralized education system. The Ministry of Education “is responsible for school curricula, educational standards, supervision of teaching personnel, and construction of school buildings” (Wolf & Breit, 2012, p. 2). In addition, formal public education has never been under the control of the Palestinians (Abu-Saad, 2006; Elboim-Dror, 2000). Instead, it has been controlled by successive colonial/external administrations (Abu-Saad, 2006). Language policies were imposed to serve the purposes and agendas of the foreign either imperialist or colonialist powers that have ruled Palestine for the last five hundred years.

Israel is a deeply socially, religiously, economically, and ethnically divided country (Wolf & Breit, 2012), and there are significant gaps in all walks of life between the different groups (Hai, 2012). As a result of these divisions, there are large disparities between the different groups, placing those of European and American origin on the top, African and Asian in the middle, and the Arabs at the bottom (Ali, 2013). This affects the latter groups’ status, progress, and achievement opportunities. Due to these divisions, the education system consists of four streams: 1) state, 2) state-religious, 3) Arab, and 4) ultra-orthodox. The language of instruction in Arab schools is Arabic, and Hebrew, the second language, is taught as a subject (Amara, 2010 & 2014; Wolf & Breit, 2012). Jabareen & Aghbariya (2011) talked about the poor quality of Palestinian Arab education in Israel, systematic governmental discrimination at all stages from elementary school to higher education, and the gap between Arabs and Jews in terms of infrastructure, funding, and educational policies that exclude Arabs. It could be concluded that successive Israeli governments regularly enact legislation that excludes, ignores, and discriminates against the Palestinian Arab minority. Since the establishment of the state, Israel has relied upon these laws to ground its discriminatory treatment of Arab citizens and allow the unequal treatment of Jewish and Arab citizens to persist. Moreover, the economic situation of many Arab families is relatively poor (Cook, 2010; Wolf & Breit, 2012; Ali, 2013), with 51% of Arab families living below the poverty line and many living in near poverty (Hai, 2012).

It has been found that many Israeli high school graduates currently lack basic English skills (Trabelsi-Hadad, 2016). This is especially true among Israel’s Palestinian Arab population. In Israel, Arabs study English as a fourth language after acquiring colloquial Arabic, classical Arabic, and Hebrew (Amara & Marie, 2002; Jubran, 2005). As small children, they generally acquire colloquial Arabic at home and then study classical Arabic upon entering first grade. In second grade, they begin studying Hebrew and then English the following year. Though Arabic is one of the official languages of the State of Israel, Hebrew is generally required for everyday life in Israel, even in areas where the Arabs make up the majority of residents. Therefore, most Arab students tend to apply and expand their knowledge of Hebrew beyond the classroom. This is not the case with English, to which Arab students usually lack sufficient access outside the classroom. English is rarely found in the linguistic landscape of Arab towns and villages, while the opposite is true in Jewish areas (Ben Raphael et al., 2006). In addition, in contrast to the Jewish population, Arab students generally lack direct contact with English-speaking communities, such as English-speaking immigrants or relatives (Amara, 2014). While English is used less than Hebrew among Arabs in Israel, it is gaining popularity among youth on social media (Shohamy, 2015).

However, when it comes to formal instruction of EAL in the Arab sector, several barriers exist. First is the low budgets set aside for Arab schools, as evidenced, for example, by the dilapidated state of many Arab schools (Jubran, 2005; Keblawi, 2005). Additionally, Israel’s Central Bureau of Statistics (2001) states that 80.7 percent of Jewish schools have libraries, compared to 64.4 percent of Arab schools (cited in Jubran, 2005). According to an education report released by The Follow-Up Committee on Arab Education–Israel (2015), there is one computer for 20 Arab pupils in the Arab sector, compared to one computer for nine Jewish pupils. Moreover, unlike the Jewish sector, Arab schools have very few English native- or near-native English-speaking teachers, seriously limiting student exposure to authentic language. This is exacerbated by EAL curricula and textbooks mainly being written by Jewish authors, overlooking the needs of Arab learners studying English as a fourth language.

1. Historical Factors: The British Mandate: 1917–1948

Palestine was under the British Mandate from 1917 to 1948. Arab education during the British Mandate was divided between government and private schools (Elboim-Droro, 2000). Unlike the Ottomans, the British did not impose their language as the first language in Palestine during their thirty-year Mandate in Palestine, and Arabic was taught similarly to other Arab countries (Miller, 1985). Most Muslim students attended state schools, and Christians and Jews attended private schools. Ellboim-Dror added that only eight percent of Arab elementary school-age children were accommodated in government schools at the beginning of the British Mandate in Palestine. Compared to the Ottoman period, some progress was made. However, this progress did not meet the educational needs of the Arab population in Palestine. During the Mandate period, English, Arabic, and Hebrew became the three official languages and were treated equally, aiming to maintain the status quo (Al-Haj, 1996). However, while Jewish and Christian schools enjoyed autonomy, Muslim schools did not.

1. Linguistic Background

Arabic is the official language in all Arab countries. Arabic is characterized by diglossia: “…the phenomenon of co-existence of two distinct language varieties in the same speech community, each of which is used for specific linguistic and communicative purposes by its speakers” (Al-Sobh et al., 2015, p. 274). In this context, it refers to the distinction between classical and spoken Arabic. Classical Arabic (CA) refers to the language of the Qur’an and religious texts and is considered the high (H) variety of Arabic, while spoken Arabic is the low (L) variety (Alfaisal & Aljanad, 2019; Almuhailib, 2019). It is the language variety for informal conversations used by ordinary people regardless of their level of education. In the contemporary world, the terms Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) replaces the term CA and is used as the official language of Arab countries in either oral or written forms, where vocabulary used in each variety is the main difference between them (Al-Sobh, et al., 2015). As a result, Classical Arabic is the language of official correspondence in the media, press, and government (Alfaisal & Aljanad, 2019), and spoken Arabic varies from country to country. Local dialects vary in degrees of mutual intelligibility among Arabic speakers of different regions (Kaye, 2001). The shift from CA to MSA helps Arabs communicate across various dialects (Albzour & Albzour, 2015). Although literacy in Arabic was developed more than 1,000 years ago, oral features still appear in students’ writing because of the effect of diglossia (Ferguson, 1959, as cited in Almuhailib, 2019), which affects Arab students’ writing abilities negatively in their native language and the additional language.

Most Palestinian Arabs in Israel attend schools in their towns and communities, where Arabic is the medium of instruction. Besides learning Arabic as their first language at school, they learn Hebrew starting in the second grade and spoken English in the third grade. Since Arabic is diglossic, requiring students to acquire the standard literary form, Amara & Mari’ (2002) claim that English is not a third language but actually a fourth. They also say that many pupils start schooling in the first grade with minimum knowledge of classical Arabic. When Arab pupils start learning English reading and writing in the fourth grade, they struggle with three different scripts: Arabic, Hebrew, and the Latin alphabet used for English.

1. Cultural Background

Culturally, Palestinian Arabs in Israel belong to the culture of the Arab world, which is constituted of 22 Arab countries. These 22 countries stretch from the Atlantic Ocean to the Persian-Arabian Gulf, with an estimated population of 423 million, and include Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Yemen. The population of the Arab world is similar in size to that of the U.S. or the European Union (Arab countries, 2022). Since more than 90 percent of Arabs are Muslim, the shared Arab culture is perceived as religious despite the different affiliations (Barakat, 1993). However, except for Saudi Arabia, the legal system of which is almost completely based on verses from the Qur’an (Sharia Law) and sayings (Ahadith) of Prophet Muhammad, all other Arab countries with majority-Muslim populations (including both Sunni and Shi’a Muslims) “follow a complex set of laws and constitutions that combine, to various degrees, both secular and Qur’an-inspired legislative systems” (Harb, 2016, p.4). It is acceptable to say that Arabic Islamic culture dominates these countries' physical and geographical spheres. Arab ethnic minorities live in other countries in the Middle East, such as Turkey, Iran, and Israel, including Palestinian citizens of Israel.

Historical developments across the 22 countries shaped four main cultural divisions within the Arab world: 1) the Fertile Crescent (Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq); 2) the Nile Valley (Sudan and Egypt); 3) the Gulf states (Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE), and 4) the Maghreb (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Mauritania).

The family comprises a socioeconomic unit bound by patriarchal relations (Barakat, 1993). Sharabi (1988), as cited in (Barakat, 1993), argues that attempts at modernization have not succeeded in breaking down the patriarchal forms and norms of relations in the Arab world, and a neo-patriarchal society that is neither modern nor traditional has emerged. In addition, collectivism, manifested in the primary group’s continuing dominance, still prevails in Arab societies, where loyalties are given to family, community, and friends despite the complaints of young people who oppose community pressures and interference in private lives (Barakat, 1993).

The Arab world is diverse and includes people from different ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. The region is historically, ethnically, religiously, and to an extent, linguistically diverse. There is, nevertheless, unity in this diversity. In addition, researchers conclude that people in the Arab world share values that might contradict those in other parts of the world. For example, research findings portray Arab people as conservative and as adhering to a hierarchical social system that values tradition and prioritizes religion (Gallup, 2012; Pew Research Center, 2013), morality (Abu-Rida, 1998), generosity (Feghali, 1997), family, and concern for the group (Harb & Smith, 2008; Harb, 2010). However, other polls show that some young Arabs have started to diverge from traditional values. For example, ASDA’A (2014) reports the findings of a poll of 3,500 youths from 16 different Arab countries, which show that family, friends, and religion are highly prioritized in the youths’ lives. A growing number of young Arabs are starting to diverge from traditional values and embrace new ones. For example, the rising shift is in social media and smartphones. They are exposed to new ideas and beliefs through social media and travel. In addition, music and songs started to play a central role in Arab youth’s lives.

Barakat (1993) claims that being spontaneous and expressive in areas of life related to emotions and the arts, particularly literature and poetry, are other prevailing characteristics of Arabs, making them perceive themselves as more emotional and others as rational and calculating. He refers to this characteristic in situations of stress or joy in interpersonal relationships. They also tend to conform due to religious and political taboos. Moreover, Arabs tend to stress symbolism, imagery, and metaphor, using ornamental language to express their emotions. All of these descriptions are relevant to the Palestinian Arab minority in Israel. Previously limited research about the influence of cultural factors on the writing of Arab students in Israel reveals similar results to what has been mentioned above.

1. Educational Background

Educational background and students’ personal experiences are considered developmental effects that contribute to L2 writers’ difficulties (Mohan & Lo, 1985; Liebman, 1992; Holyoak & Piper, 1997, as cited in Al-Khatib, 2017). Education seems also to play a role in Arab writing in English. For example, in Ahmed’s (2010) examination of EFL Egyptian students’ writing, he attributed the challenges of sequencing ideas mainly to a lack of self-confidence and writing anxiety, citing the influence of the conservative mentality in raising Arab children. He claims that Arab families usually marginalize the voice of their children, which implants a lack of confidence in putting forth opinions. Similarly, it has been found that pre-college Arab teachers, seen as absolute authorities, usually do not encourage students to express their opinions or ask questions (Al-Haj, 1996; Al-Issa, 2005; Eilam, 2002; Sonleitner & Khelifa, 2005). They can also be indifferent to students’ voices in classes, a feature of the inculcation method employed in Arab education based on rote learning, repetition, and memorization (Al-Issa, 2005; Sonleitner and Khelifa, 2005). Researchers who teach Arab postgraduate students in Malaysia (Al-Zubaidi, 2012; Ibrahim & Nambiar, 2011) have mentioned similar practices. It is unsurprising that Ahmed (2010) thus describes children as passive watchers who are not permitted to argue or negotiate meaning with teachers. Moreover, Reid (1989: 223) noted that Arabic speakers believe writing to be a skill “only the gifted possess,” thus reserving its practice only to those who prove to have the “gift”. Such educational practices encourage a control-oriented approach over the critical and reflective thinking often valued in English language writing educational contexts (Al-Issa, 2005). Arab researchers and educators from Israel reported similar issues regarding Arab education in Israel, and English education is no exception.

In addition to the above discussion, Arab education in Israel lags behind Jewish education. It is possible to evaluate the Arab students’ level of English in a few parameters, which describe the situation as grim and worrying. For example, the results of the national and international exams in English as a foreign language at the elementary and high school levels are dismal. For example, my Arab students, who are majoring in EFL in a B.Ed program in a teacher training college, have studied English for at least eight years, and many of them have achieved an 85 or above grade on a four or five-point English matriculation exam, which includes an English composition. Arab education is based on transmitting material via frontal lectures, memorization, copying, and rote learning (Abu Rass, 2011; Ahmed, 2010; Al-Haj, 1999 & Al-Issa, 2005). Since Arab educational environments are teacher-centered, absolute authority is assigned to the teacher, who usually does not encourage students to express their opinions or ask questions (Al-Haj, 1999; Al-Issa, 2005; Eilam, 2002). As a result, Muslim Arab students are accustomed to a control-oriented approach rather than an experiential approach of trial and error, including reflective thinking, which is essential for language learning. They also expect to achieve high grades by producing answers verbatim from their texts (Abu Shmais, 2003) rather than engaging in their meaning-making. In addition, Arab students tend to prioritize pleasing their teacher over meeting their own learning needs (Sonleitner & Khelifa, 2005), thus impeding their foreign language development.

Therefore, it is unsurprising that the academic achievements in English among Arab pupils are modest, and the gaps between them and their Jewish counterparts are quite wide (Keblawi, 2005). The results of the national elementary and junior high EAL achievement tests (Israel Ministry of Education, 2016) administered by the Israel Ministry of Education reveal that Arab schools lag behind parallel schools in the Jewish sector. Fortunately, this gap has been narrowing at the elementary school level (fifth grade), though worryingly, the gap is still rather significant at the middle school level (Israel Ministry of Education, 2016).

Given the Israeli Ministry of Education’s current emphasis on the teaching and learning of EAL and the disturbingly lower EAL achievements of Arab middle school students versus their Jewish counterparts, it would seem useful to examine the training of the Arab sector’s middle and high school EAL teachers.

Graduating from poor education in Arab schools poses an obstacle for Arab students to pursue their studies in higher education institutes since they are not prepared to pass the matriculation exams and cope with academic demands (Hai, 2012). A lack of English proficiency is another barrier (Hai, 2012) because many Arab students face major difficulties passing the English matriculation exams at the end of their studies in high schools, the English section of the psychometric exam, and the entrance exam for universities (Amara, 2010, 2014). In addition, all students, regardless of their major for undergraduate degrees, must take English courses for academic purposes. Those pursuing graduate degrees are expected to demonstrate a high level of English proficiency since they are required to read academic articles in English, including academic writing, offered to doctoral students.

1. The Importance of English in Israel

As an international language, English is a prestigious language in Israel, as is the case in many other countries. In addition, it was an official language in Palestine during the British Mandate. It has a special status because it is an international language and the native language of many Jewish immigrants who have immigrated to Israel over the last seventy years (Shohamy, 2014). Besides being an international lingua franca, it has a major role in different domains, such as business, education, academia (Shohamy, 2014), and access to knowledge (Spolsky & Shohamy, 1999). The university entrance exam, which has English, as one of its components besides mother tongue and mathematics, is required for all candidates for the B.A. degree. In addition, all students, regardless of their major for undergraduate degrees, must take English courses for academic purposes. Those pursuing graduate degrees are expected to demonstrate a high level of English proficiency since they are required to read academic articles in English. The medium of instruction of some graduate programs is English. Furthermore, universities expect publications to be in English (Spolsky & Shohamy, 2001; Aronin & Spolsky, 2010). Due to the role of English as a global language, it is as important to Israeli Palestinians as to other Israelis as the most commonly used foreign language (Amara, 2014).

1. Challenges Facing Palestinian Arab Students in Learning English

Both Jewish and Palestinian students learn English as a foreign language in Israel (Amara & Mar’i, 2002; Shohamy & Spolsky, 1999), following the same national curriculum (Awayed-Bishara, 2015; Jubran, 2005). The Israeli school system is centralized and controlled by the Education Ministry, with regional supervision inspectorates. Two separate education systems operate in the country: one for Jews and another for non-Jews (Jubran, 2005). There are two independent systems for non-Jewish children: one for Arabs and the other for Druze (Jubran, 2005). The Bedouins of Israel, who used to have a semi-nomadic lifestyle, live mainly in the Negev, the southern part of Israel, and some in the North. The Bedouin schools in the North are under the national Jewish state supervision system, and those in the South are under the Arab supervision system. However, the English curriculum is uniform for all sectors despite the differences in these sectors. While it 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 (EFL) because they have already acquired colloquial Arabic before their formal education, Classical Arabic starting from grade one at school, and Hebrew starting from second grade (Amara & Marie, 2002).

Unlike Jewish students who have contact with English-speaking communities in Israel and abroad, the exposure of EFL Arab learners to authentic English is limited (Amara, 2014). Many native and near-native speakers of English teach in the Jewish sector. However, Arab students do not enjoy such a privilege. Compounding the linguistic challenges are fundamental differences between traditional Arab education and current EFL pedagogy. As mentioned above, Arab education is often based on transmitting material via frontal lectures, memorization, copying, and rote learning (Abu Rass, 2011; Amara, 2014; Al-Haj, 1999). However, current EFL pedagogy recommends that language teachers employ a variety of approaches, strategies, and techniques to teach the language effectively and help learners learn successfully (Richards & Farrell, 2011). Teachers should be able to take risks implementing alternative models (Farr, 2010). In addition, phonics was a dominant method for developing literacy among young learners. On the contrary, the language methods implemented in Jewish schools emphasized comprehension and self-expression.

As a result of this situation, the proficiency level of Arab learners in English is significantly lower than that of the Jews (Shohamy, 2014). Jewish students largely outperform Arab students in national and international tests (Keblawi, 2005). For example, the national tests are Meitzav, Bagrut, and Psychometric. While the Meitzav is designed to examine pupils’ abilities in their mother tongue and English from grade five to grade eight, the Bagrut exam is given at the end of high school. Results of the English section in the university entrance exams for Hebrew speakers are much higher than for Arabic speakers. The scores range from 110–112 for the former group and 84–87 for the latter (Mustafa, 2009). In short, the achievements of Arabic speakers in English are much lower than those of their Jewish counterparts at all stages of education.

The low achievement of Arab students in these exams is attributed to the implementation of different educational policies in both sectors regarding allocating budgets and the use of irrelevant materials and textbooks. Budgets allocated to Arab schools are arbitrary and do not follow clear criteria (Sarsor, 1999). Examining the average student budget for the 2015–2016 school year shows that the average budget per student in the Arab sector is lower than the average budget per student in the Jewish sector (Winiger, 2018). For example, the average budget of a Jewish elementary school pupil of low socioeconomic status is NIS 26, 740 while the Arab counterpart is NIS17,176. It is important to mention that more money has been channeled in the last years to bridge the gap between Arab and Jewish education in Israel, but the gap remains wide. In addition, the English curricula and textbooks are mainly written by Jewish authors (Abu-Salih, 2011; Cook, 2016), overlooking the needs of Arab learners studying English as a fourth language.

One English curriculum is used at all Israeli schools. It is supervised by the same chief English inspector (Amara, 2014) and uses textbooks more appropriate to the dominant groups. They are well-designed but do not cater to the cultural specificities of all groups. While Jewish and Western cultures are represented in these books, the Arab Palestinian culture is not. English textbooks used in Israeli schools are culturally insensitive (Abu-Salih, 2011). For example, literary texts are included from different cultures, excluding the Palestinian culture or any other Arab culture.

Despite the conditions mentioned above, recently, there have been some changes regarding learning English among Arabs in Israel. More qualified teachers are being recruited, especially in elementary and junior high schools. In addition, the use of the internet, watching movies, and listening to music have become more widespread among Arab youngsters (Amara, 2010), which increases the opportunities for acquiring English informally. Moreover, parents of Arab children are increasingly encouraging their children to improve their English proficiency to pursue their education in higher education institutes in Israel (Amara & Mar’i, 2002).

1. Organization of the Book

This book presents, describes, and analyzes errors and mistakes committed by EFL Palestinian Arab students at the college and university levels, starting from sentence structure and ending with writing their final projects, a research article (RA) when pursuing a bachelor's degree in EFL and a research paper (RP) at the end of the master’s degree studies. Each chapter reviews the errors and their potential sources. Another chapter was dedicated to cultural issues, investigating the influence of the first culture in terms of religion and beliefs and its reflection on education. The last chapter introduces the reader to the discussion of different scholars regarding the ineffectiveness of adopting traditional, outdated methods of instruction and the effectiveness of adopting the process approach, other strategies and techniques, and employing digital tools. For error analysis at all levels of texts, error, text, and contrastive analysis was employed to identify the errors and their sources, which were classified and categorized to assist students in comprehending the sources of their mistakes and errors and to correct them through time.

The second chapter introduces the reader to sources of EFL college students’ writing difficulties in general and to Arab students in specific such as inter-language, intra-language, positive and negative L1 transfer and their effect on language acquisition, mainly on enhancing or hindering the writing abilities of this population.

The following chapter explores students’ mistakes and errors, local as well as global, at the sentence level, which falls into three categories: syntactic, semantic, and mechanic. Each category is divided into subcategories, following categories and classifications of prominent researchers in EFL.

Chapter 4 deals with paragraphing and paragraph development, introducing the readers of this book to different structures of paragraphs but focusing on one that includes a topic sentence, supporting details, and a conclusion. The source of most of the mistakes and errors discussed in this chapter is the negative transfer of Arabic language features of Arabic like repetition, indirectness, use of a series of clauses, circularity of organization, excessive use of the personal pronouns “I” and “we,” overuse of coordination and lack of subordination, and overuse of commas. In addition, there is a tendency among writers to convey messages implicitly, assuming that readers understand their messages.

Chapter 5 extends the discussion and analysis to include errors committed by Arab EFL students at the essay level. Firstly, it introduces different definitions of an essay, followed by its structure and different genres, focusing on four, expository, problem-solution, comparison and contrast, and persuasive essay that are practiced in the context of this study. A description and explanation of mistakes and errors follow, emphasizing the importance of discourse markers (DM) to produce cohesive essays.

The most advanced-level writing course, which is discussed in Chapter 6, challenges and difficulties of Arab EFL students when writing an article paper (AP) for undergraduate students and a research paper (RP) for postgraduate students, including paraphrasing, summarizing, analyzing information, synthesizing content from different sources, and relating their voice to other scholars’ research in the examined field. It provides examples of a lack of writers’ awareness of the required skills and conventions for developing APs and RPs, such as rules of in-text citation and references.

First cultural beliefs, modes, and patterns of thinking and their influence on educational experiences are the focus of Chapter 7. It starts with the influence of Islam as the religion of Arabic EFL students and their first culture, discussing the relationship between language and culture and their effects on learning and teaching writing in English. It explores errors that stem from Islam, Arabic culture, and prior learning experiences by analyzing, categorizing, and presenting them.

Chapter 8 discusses the crucial role of instruction and evaluation in improving EFL students in writing classes at all levels, highlighting the disadvantages of employing traditional methods and introducing more effective ones and indicating the need for adopting an eclectic approach. This chapter also describes the techniques and strategies adopted, such as using rubrics, providing feedback for the process approach at different writing course levels, and employing advanced technology to enhance students’ writing abilities. The chapter offers recommendations for teaching writing sentences, paragraphs, essays, and seminar papers.

1. Conclusion

Writing this book aims to discuss an almost neglected aspect of language acquisition among Palestinian Arab EFL students at the college or university level, who face many obstacles in writing well-composed, organized texts in English. They share the same challenges with other Arab EFL students wherever they pursue their academic degrees. Error and text analysis can assist writing teachers and students identify obstacles, challenges, and difficulties EFL students encounter in writing syntactically and semantically acceptable and culturally appropriate texts in English. In addition, employing updated methods, strategies, and techniques, including digital tools, would also make a difference in enhancing writers’ abilities. In conclusion, the principles of the described instruction in this book could be applied in other EFL writing programs worldwide to achieve better results in enhancing students’ writing.

Chapter 2

Writing Difficulties for Arab EFL Learners

1. Introduction

This chapter explores sources of EFL writing difficulties in general and for Arab learners in particular. It starts with an overview of the importance of mastering writing skills in the history of humanity, allowing communication among people. Then it exposes readers to the challenges of acquiring writing skills that face not only non-native speakers but also native speakers. It also reviews several research studies concerning sources of EFL writing learners in English in general. A discussion that identifies sources of Arab EFL learners’ difficulties in writing in English that is supported by several research studies follows, highlighting three sources: inter-language (first language interference), intra-language (students’ developmental level between first and second language), and peculiarities of the second or target language. A discussion of the transfer of stylistics and features of the Arabic language comes after. At the end of this chapter, contrastive and rhetoric analyses that highlight similarities and differences between L1 and L2 in terms of grammar and rhetoric are explained. The chapter ends with a discussion about the importance of employing error analysis systematically to identify the learners’ errors and their sources.

1. Sources of Errors

Based on the natural order hypothesis (Krashen, 1983), writing is generally the last skill of the four language skills to be acquired. Writing is a complicated cognitive task requiring careful thought and concentration (Widdowson, 1983; Smith, 1989; White, 1987).

Writing is important for learners (Gorospe & Rayton, 2022) since they use it as a medium for learning other courses, doing home assignments and projects, communicating with their instructors (Kasem, 2017), and handling daily life (Niño & Páez, 2018). Many researchers (Li, 2012; Choi, 2013; Olanezhad, 2015) emphasize the importance of writing in the history of humanity because it allows people to express their feelings, achievements, thoughts, and points of view. In addition, writing connects people from different ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds.

In addition, it is challenging for native speakers (NS) and non-native speakers (NNS) alike because writers must balance multiple issues such as content, organization, purpose, audience, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling, and mechanics such as punctuation. Writing is especially difficult for non-native speakers (Ahmed, 2010; Al Shammari, 2018; Alsahafi, 2017; Seitova, 2016; Tahaineh, 2010) because they are expected to create written products demonstrating mastery of all the above elements in a new language. In addition, mastering all the rules of punctuation, spelling, grammar, and style does not suffice to be fully competent in writing for communicative purposes (Krashen, 1984). ESL/ EFL learners should be acquainted with the culture of the target language in order to communicate effectively in English (Scarino and Liddicoat, 2013).

Moreover, academic writing usually requires students to use “an elaborate structure and an extensive range of vocabulary” (Al-Mansour, 2015, p. 95) to develop their thoughts, following certain rules and mechanics to show clarity of thought and content (Swales, 2005). In addition, learners in writing classes should investigate and analyze experiences and beliefs, reading texts in depth to discover important information and underlying meanings.

Furthermore, academic writing requires writers to plan and organize their ideas and experiences following a formal order or structure that includes an internal division, such as an introduction, body, and conclusion, and to support them with sources (Al-Mansour, 2015). Prominent features of academic writing include: “a proper outline or summary, formal tone, precise language, presentation of the point of view in the third person, analysis of the facts presented, deductive reasoning, avoiding slang and abbreviations, referencing, and shaping ideas and concepts in concrete language with apt words and phrases” (Al-Mansour, 2015, p.96). Writing goes through several developmental processes (Inayah & Nanda, 2016), requiring special attention to learning and teaching from the early stages of language development (Fareed et al., 2016). Writing in a second language is even more demanding because it is “a complex, challenging, and difficult process” (Alsamadani, 2010) since writers are expected to produce syntactically accurate, semantically acceptable, and culturally appropriate texts. The level of teachers’ qualifications and effectiveness also affects the students’ writing (Fareed et al., 2006). The consequences can be dire if the teachers are not well-trained and employ ineffective teaching methods. L1 interference greatly affects ESL/EFL students’ writing, causing negative transfer. Seitova (2016) examined common errors produced by 32 Kazakh and Russian speakers in English, analyzing their compositions. Their findings indicate that the most common mistakes concerned pluralization, subject-verb agreement, omission or misuse of articles, inappropriate choice of words, omission or misuse of prepositions, spelling, and misuse of the like+V-ing form (e.g., I like watching television). Bennui (2008), employing contrastive analysis, error analysis, interlanguage analysis, and contrastive rhetoric, analyzed L1 interference in Thai students’ paragraphs in final exams on three levels: words, sentences, and discourse. The data in this study indicated significant L1 interference at all three levels. The students used the literal translation of Thai words into English and borrowed Thai structural patterns such as word order, subject-verb agreement, and noun determiners.

French (2005) investigated errors in Japanese students’ written products in English at Chukyo University, aiming to determine the level of acceptance of these errors among teachers. Results showed little acceptance of the third person singular (s), article, and plural errors in student writing. However, there was a high degree of acceptance of errors regarding sentence combining and sentence fragments, omission of the subject, generalizing or obscuring of subjects, and omission of expected superlatives.

Another study was conducted by Dipolog-Ubanan (2016) to investigate the common errors produced by Chinese students in the English Language and Communication Department at UCSI in Malaysia, whose main difficulty is writing in English. The author analyzed paragraphs written by 30 Chinese students, categorized their errors, and interviewed 10 of them to solicit their views on their writing difficulties. Data analysis revealed that the most common errors were in word choice and word form, spelling, tenses, use of articles and determiners, number, and agreement of subject and verb. The analysis of the interviews showed that these students were aware of their first language interference in their writing in English and talked frankly about their tendency to translate from their L1 to English when they write in English.

Like many students worldwide, Arab students face tremendous difficulties developing syntactically and semantically acceptable sentences and well-written paragraphs in English. Like their global peers, Arabic L1 students struggle with fluency, content, organization, and accuracy in using acceptable grammatical patterns, punctuation, and spelling. In addition, they tend to translate their thoughts from Arabic into English as instruction is primarily in Arabic (Al-Khasawneh, 2010; Alghizzi, 2017). Studies have shown that Arab students’ attitudes tend to be negative toward their writing skills in English. For example, Alkhairy (2013) conducted a study on the academic writing problems faced by Saudi students majoring in English at Taif University in which 75 subjects completed a 32-item questionnaire about their difficulties with English. They reported having weak writing skills.

Similarly, Javid and Umer (2014) surveyed 194 university-level Saudi EFL learners to investigate their views regarding their writing skills. They found that their students overwhelmingly held negative attitudes toward their abilities in English. Alharbi (2018) conducted another study on 55 Saudi students majoring in English to examine the writing difficulties in English among these students. Besides the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather data. The results showed that the participants faced difficulties in English writing. These difficulties were attributed to the language’s complex syntax and morphology.

Many research projects concerning problems of Arab learners of English have concentrated on word and sentence levels following the structural approach of error and contrastive analysis. Other studies focused on the syntactic level, such as the excessive use of the definite article “the” or the omission of the copula–the verb to be (Al-Buainain, 2007; Al-Mohanna, 2014 & Ridha, 2012). Arab students have been found tending to translate their thoughts from Arabic into English (Al-Khasawneh & Saleh, 2010; Alghizzi, 2017) and write long sentences, repeat themselves, use presentation and elaboration for persuading the reader, and use semantic and phonological parallelism (Monassar, 2014).

Monassar’s (2014) study focuses not only on sentence-level errors but also on paragraph development. Paragraph development refers to properly using topic sentences, concluding sentences, and supporting details, usually expressed implicitly in long clauses. Arab students in this study were found to excessively use *and*, *also*, *which*, and *that*. Chapters three and four discuss these problems in detail.

Qaddumi & Walweel (2018) examined the most common errors among Palestinian university students at Al Istiqlal University in Jericho, Palestine, selecting 22 (12 male and ten female) students randomly from the modern languages department to take a standardized test in English writing, examining their compositions’ content, organization, mechanics, language use, and vocabulary. Results show that correctly spelling the words is a major problem among these students (14% of the total errors). Semantics comes next (11%), followed by grammar (10.3%) and vocabulary (9.2%). Examples of these errors are found in Chapter 3.

Regarding language use, the students in this study did not differentiate between the present simple and continuous tense and failed to employ correct subject-verb agreement in their sentences (Qaddumi & Walweel, 2018). Based on previous research studies, the researchers attributed these errors to factors like fossilization, first language interference, and overgeneralization of language rules in English. Sawalmeh (2013) conducted a study on 32 male Saudi students enrolled in a preparatory year at Hail University. Analyzing the students’ essays showed that incorrect verb tenses, spelling, and articles were among the most commonly produced errors. Al Mubarak (2017) reviewed the graduation projects of 15 Sudanese EFL learners to examine their writing ability. The researcher concluded that the subjects had poor writing skills and incorrect prepositions and punctuation marks were the most common errors. Althobaiti (2014) conducted a study on 60 university-level Saudi students at Taif University. Thirty participated in a preparatory program that supported them academically to help them cope with academic demands before starting their majors. These preparatory courses included computer and information technology, communication skills, and English. The other 30 subjects were English-major students in their second year. The former student group was asked to write a paragraph of around 100 words, whereas the latter wrote around 200 words. The findings showed that the first group produced the highest number of errors in verb tenses, followed by spelling and word order. The advanced group made the most errors using articles, followed by verb tenses and prepositions.

Al-Khatib (2017) and Mallia (2015) attribute difficulties of EFL writing in general and to Arab heritage students in particular to several factors: 1) reader-writer responsibility expectations; (ii) the learners’ developmental stage (interlanguage); (iii) rhetoric, text features and their relatedness to specific genres, and (iv) aspects of positive and negative transfer. Al-Khatib (2017) adds culture-specific schemata. Others attribute the problems of Arab EFL learners to linguistic incompetence, lack of rhetorical structural mastery of English texts, transfer of first language and cultural patterns, and outdated teaching methods (Abu Rass, 2011, 2015, Al-Khuweileh & Al-Shoumali, 2000; Al-Hazmi & Schofield, 2007; Fitze & Glasgow, 2009). In summary, it can be concluded that some of the challenges of Arab students writing in academic English can be attributed to Arabic culture, educational practices, and discourse (Al Khuweileh & Al Shoumali, 2000; Al Hazmi & Schofield, 2007), particularly regarding the organization of thoughts (Al-Khasawneh, 2010), which are often achieved by using cohesive ties appropriately. Chapter 7 discusses these issues in depth, providing specific examples of the impact of each factor.

Khatter (2019) adds that learners becoming increasingly digital and visual is another difficulty EFL teachers might face in teaching students how to write well in English. She also mentions the reluctance of Arab students to write in their L1, which affects their confidence negatively in their ability to write in English as the target language. The connection between culture and rhetoric is not a new concept. It was raised by Oliver (1965, pp. 10–11), who stated:

Rhetoric is a mode of thinking, or a mode of finding all available means for the achievement of a designated end... Cultural anthropologists point out given acts and objects appear vastly different in different cultures, depending on the values attached to them. Psychologists investigating perception are increasingly insistent that what is perceived depends upon the observer’s perceptual frame of reference.

The focus on surface-level writing errors at the expense of written discourse and genre analysis may be one of the main causes.

When L1 and L2 are similar, it is easier for language learners to acquire the L2 (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Cook, 1999). The further apart the L1 and target language, the more difficult it becomes for language learners, and they encounter more difficulties in their writing (Timina, 2013). Arabic bears no relation to English, so Arab learners of English of all ages have enormous difficulty producing error-free English phrases (Mourssi, 2013).

Besides the problems mentioned above, some scholars pointed to methods of instruction as another problem that hinders effective English learning among Arab students since, in many cases and situations, instruction emphasizes writing as a product rather than a process (Almari & Adawi, 2021; Alzamil, 2020; Anwar & Ahmed, 2016; Ezza, 2010). They are exposed to the rules of writing and grammar from the outset without developing their ability to express their ideas. The teaching methods and strategies employed might not be appropriate since writing examinations include inappropriate assessment techniques like multiple-choice, short answers, matching, and providing learners with topic sentences for elaboration (Khatter, 2019). In addition, students can lack motivation and opportunities to practice in and out of the classroom (Al-Khsawneh, 2010; Khatter, 2019). Ezza (2010) adds that Arab EFL learners fail “to handle a variety of assignments as prescribed by the syllabus that has constituted their language training” (p. 33). In a more recent study, Ezza (2014) claims that, although some graduates have developed paragraphing competence, they could not write *curriculum vitae* and professional application letters. He mentions that writing instruction at the tertiary level in the Arab world has not kept pace with developments in linguistic theory, such as contrastive rhetoric, discourse analysis, and genre analysis. In addition, most writing courses adopt pedagogy from the 1950s and 1960s, in which controlled composition with lexicon and grammar practice were the norm. Ezza’s review of writing courses in four Arab universities, King Saud University in Saudi Arabia, Birzeit University in Palestine, Qatar University in Qatar, and An-Najah University in Palestine, revealed that these courses focused on lexicon and grammatical exercises to the detriment of paragraph and essay writing skills like topic sentences, thesis statements, supporting sentences, concluding sentences, transition words.

Some researchers extended their investigation of the writing errors made by Arab EFL students by administering questionnaires and conducting interviews with writing instructors and their students. For example, Ahamed (2016) analyzed the writing errors of Saudi EFL university students at the Tanumah College of Science & Arts at King Khalid University. A questionnaire was administered, asking 20 participants to respond to 46 questions to ascertain their perceptions and evaluations of their writing abilities. He conducted a structured interview with the writing teachers to explore their opinion about their learners’ performance in academic writing. Results revealed that 90% consider writing a major problem for students; 80% think writing lessons are difficult, and 60% think it is the least important language skill for them. Despite these results, 80% agree that writing improves their academic achievement, and 75% think it strengthens their critical thinking. In addition, 90% of the participants thought the two-hour weekly writing lessons were insufficient, and 80% did not think they wrote regularly enough.

In Ahamed’s (2016) study regarding types of errors, 85% of students considered spelling a serious problem. English grammar is a major challenge when writing an essay. When students write essays in English, 75 % could not identify the topic sentence, 90% could not provide enough relevant ideas, and 85% expressed an inability to write cohesive texts. A similar percentage expressed difficulty correctly spelling words and organizing their ideas. Similarly, a high percentage (90%) of students struggle with including the right punctuation and linking sentences, while 80% had difficulty expressing their ideas easily when writing an essay. Analyzing the teachers’ interviews showed that 93% of EFL university teachers believed that the performance in academic writing of Saudi EFL university learners at the College of Science and Arts in Tanumah is poor, relating mainly to L1 interference and inappropriate teaching methods and strategies. In addition, they thought that their learners lacked adequate lexical stock and did not get enough writing practice. Moreover, these learners did not get suitable feedback and instruction regarding discourse features for writing coherent and cohesive texts. While Ababneh (2017) recommends that EFL teachers consider some of the causes of errors in the teaching strategies for improving the student’s writing skills, Abushihab (2014) emphasizes analyzing interlingual or transfer errors as an important strategy in the learning process.

* 1. Interlanguage

According to Abdulmoneim (2000) and Abisamra (2003), most of the syntactic errors committed by Arab EFL learners in their written production stem from interference from their first language. Negative transfer occurs where there are differences between the L1 and L2 (Abdulmoneim, 2000). In the context of learning another language, transfer refers to the influence of the learner’s native language (Bardovi-Harlig & Sprouse (2018). According to Corder (1971), interlingual or error transfer happens when the learner transfers their first language habits in terms of patterns, systems, or rules, which may prevent them from acquiring the patterns and rules of the target language. Negative transfer or interference occurs when the first language influence leads to errors in using the target language (Bardovi-Harlig & Sprouse, 2018). In contrast, positive transfer or facilitation occurs when first language influence leads to immediate or rapid acquisition.

Many scholars conducted research in the last century to investigate errors made by Arabic-speaking EFL learners in their writing and found that these learners face serious problems in writing English that impede their ability to express their thoughts on paper (Derrick-Mscua & Gmuca, 1985; Koch, 1983). Recently, Arab researchers started investigating issues concerning Arab student writing and found that writing difficulties for this population mainly stem from first language interference (Abisamara, 2003; Ridha, 2012) and are also systematic and classifiable (Al-Buainain, 2007). These problems cover many areas, such as syntax, morphology, and spelling (Al-Buainain, 2007), semantics (Al-Shormani, 2010), and the use of prepositions (Tahaineh, 2010). Other problems stem from cultural interference (Abu Rass, 2011).

* 1. Transferring the Stylistics of Arabic

Regarding syntax, Arab writers tend to use long sentences, repetition, presentation, and elaboration (Johnstone, as cited in Almehmadi, 2012). Koch (1983) noted the transference of Arab stylistics, such as the extensive use of parallelism and repetition of the most powerful words and phrases. The following example illustrates the tendency of repeating words to convey messages: “Unfortunately, my bad luck destroys me and affects me so much, and I wish that it changes” (Al-Khatib, 2017).

While English prefers subordination to coordination, Arabic prefers coordination to subordination (Diab, 1996). Examples of coordinating conjunctions are *and*, *but*, and *or*, and subordinating ones are *although*, *after*, and *while*. The former expresses equality between the connected ideas, and the latter implies the opposite (Almehmadi, 2012). According to Quirk et al. (as cited in Almehmadi, 2012), sentences are semantically equal and syntactically independent when they are combined by coordinators (*Many young people eat fast food, and they practice sports*). However, combining sentences with subordinators makes them semantically unequal, and the subordinate clause is syntactically independent that cannot stand by itself. This sentence provides an example of the use of subordination (*After I arrived the airport, I realized that the airplane was canceled*).

In writing long sentences, writers use coordination and subordination, two syntactic structures utilized in both Arabic and English (Othman, 2004), with a preference for coordination. Othman (2004) conducted a study to test this claim using three types of corpus texts: texts originally written in English, texts originally written in Arabic, and texts translated from English into Arabic. The researcher tallied the number of instances of subordination and coordination and produced rations for comparison. Othman (2004), like Diab (2006), concluded that subordination and coordination are common in Arabic and English, but the former is less frequent than in English. In other words, coordination is the main tactic for coherences in Arabic, whereas subordination dominates in English. In addition, subordination in English writing is considered a sign of maturity and sophistication. The preference for subordination over coordination was obvious in the translated texts from English into Arabic, following the norms of the source language rather than the target language. These texts sounded more English than Arabic.

* 1. Repetition

Repetition occurs by writing more synonyms in the same sentence (Johnstone, as cited in Almehmadi, 2012). For instance, the phrase *demolition and destruction* could be repeated twice in one sentence to convey emphasis or repeat ideas to convince the reader. Therefore, redundancy is also obvious in the writing of Arabic-speaking students. According to Al-Jubouri (1984), repetition is used as a strategy employed by Arab students for making arguments at three levels: the phrase, the clause, and the larger discourse.

* 1. Presentation and Elaboration

Presentation and elaboration are features of argumentation in Arabic prose. Transferring the style of persuasion in Arabic, its native speakers elaborate on one point of view, which is usually accepted by the reader (Koch, 1983) by presenting facts or quotes to support it (Derric-Mescua & Guma, 1985). For example, if the topic of a writing assignment is about eating fast food. Arabic-speaking students tend to present one point of view, either for or against, and support it with facts and quotations. If the writer holds a positive attitude toward eating fast food, s/he would talk about the taste, quoting his/her family or family members. Thus, Arabic-speaking students do not provide different perspectives in their arguments. Also, they often talk indirectly about the topic repeating phrases before stating the main points Dweik (1986) (as cited in Alsamadani, 2010). They argue through presentation and elaboration (Johnstone, as cited in Almehmadi, 2012).

In addition, they use the coordinating conjunctions *and* and *but*; the former is parallel to *wa* and *fa* and the latter to *lakin* in Arabic (Almehmadi, 2012). Al-Kharesheh (2011) claims that Arabic sentences usually start with *wa*, which is equivalent to *and*, and Arab students usually transfer the stylistics of Arabic into English. When Al-Khreshes (2011) analyzed the compositions of 120 Jordanian school students, he found a “carryover of Arabic (L1) syntactic structure into English (L2)” (p. 426). He found 426 errors concerning the coordinating conjunction *and*. He attributed this to first-language interference and interlingual interference. He concluded that the subjects of his study used their L1 as a learning strategy in their learning of English to solve learning and communication problems that they faced, relying specifically on an interlingual strategy to facilitate their language learning process.

In addition, Al-Khatib (2001) examined Jordanian students’ letter writing in English and found that Arab learners’ sentences are very verbose. Earlier studies show similar findings, such as the study conducted by Koch (1983), who analyzed English essays by Arabic-speaking English learners and found that most learners made extensive use of devices such as parallelism and the repetition of the most powerful words and phrases. Koch concluded that Arab learners of English transfer certain features of Arabic discourse, which may influence Arab students to repeat words or phrases in English.

Many researchers note that Arab learners of English tend to write long sentences with coordinating conjunctions (Al-Khatib, 2001; Modhish, 2012; Oshima & Hougeas, cited in Almehmadi, 2012). They often talk around the topic and repeat phrases before stating the main points (Dweik, as cited in Alsamadani, 2010). In addition, the degree of explicitness and implicitness of the message is another difference between Arabic and English stylistics (Mohamed as cited in Mohamed & Omar, 2000). For instance, Arab writers usually avoid conveying their messages explicitly, assuming that readers are responsible for understanding the message.

The following examples of lengthy sentences could be considered proof of first-language interference.

1. In the last decade we all witnessed some serious developments and changes when it comes to technology such as: new advanced mobile phones that could replace a lot of things like an alarm clock, cameras, notebooks and so much more, in addition to that video games are getting so realistic in terms of graphics and visuals which makes them more appealing, for instance a video game called’’ GTA ‘’ this video game is basically a virtual world that you can do whatever you want in it with your fictional character, this game can seem so realistic that many children are taking it way too seriously, and it's quite easy to get addicted to it.

2. But there are negative qualities about her, like: she is irresponsible person like she doesn’t do her homework for school, doesn’t listen to her parents talk, when she get into trouble she just run away without listening to anyone.

Dulay and Burt (1974) categorized errors committed by ESL/ EFL learners into three groups: interference, intralingual, and unique errors. Their study showed that only 5% of the errors were interference while 87% were intralingual and 8% were unique. The researchers concluded that children do not use their L1 habits to learn a new language. Richards (1970) discussed intralingual or developmental errors resulting from the learned second or foreign language. According to Richards (1970), intralingual or developmental errors are “items produced by the learner which reflect not the structure of the mother tongue, but generalizations based on partial exposure to the target language. The learner, in this case, tries to “derive the rules behind the data to which he/she has been exposed and may develop hypotheses that correspond neither to the mother tongue nor to the target language” (Richards, 1970, p. 6). Richards (1970) classified intralingual or developmental errors into four categories: overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, and semantic errors.

1. Peculiarities of English as a Target Language

English and Arabic differ tremendously due to their different alphabets, sounds, vowel patterns, pronunciation, capitalization style, articles, and writing style (Shabbir & Bughio, 2009). In addition, “English cohesion is text-based, specified, change-oriented, and non-additive; while Arabic cohesion is context-based, generalized, repetition-oriented, and additive” (Al-Khatib, 2017, p. 75). Moreover, English is written from left to right and Arabic from right to left, which may confuse Arab learners of English (AbiSamara, 2003; Sabbir & Bughio, 2009). AbiSamara (2003) categorized the differences between Arabic and English into the following categories: the written language, sentence structure and word order, nouns and pronouns, verbs and verbals, adjectives and adverbials, and articles. She provided examples for each category. For example, in the first category, the written language, she included three facts: Arabic is written from right to left, spelling is phonetic, and there is no distinction between upper and lower case.

Furthermore, culturally, both languages are poles apart (Abu Rass, 2011; Ahmed, 2010; Qaddumi, 1995; Shabbir & Bughio, 2009). Arab learners of English not only transfer the stylistic features of Arabic as their first language (Abdulmoeim, 2000; AbiSamara, 2003 & Diab, 1996) but also cultural modes of thinking (Abu Rass, 2011; Ahmed, 2010; Qaddumi, 1995) and prior learning experiences (Al-Haj, 1996; Al-Issa, 2005; Eilam, 2002; Sonleitner & Khelifa, 2005). In addition, “the Arabic-speaking community is oralized, collectivist, high-contact, reader-responsible; in contrast, the English-speaking community is literate, individualistic, low-contact, writer-responsible” (Al-Khatib, 2017, p. 75).

1. Contrastive Analysis

Contrasting both languages is significant in teaching the target language since it benefits teachers in understanding the difference between the basic grammar of the two languages. Based on these analyses, teachers will be able to predict errors or difficulties in order to take care of them. Transfer happens in two forms: positive and negative. Positive transfer occurs when the structure of two languages is similar and results in accurate constructions. Negative transfer, on the other hand, occurs when learners use incorrect structures in the target language due to grammatical differences between L1 and L2 that the learner does not understand. The copula omission is an example from the Arabic language that can be used to better understand negative transfer (Benmamoun, 2000). Employing contrastive analysis in teaching writing can remind the learners from time to time that they make mistakes because of the influence of their mother tongue. If they are not reminded of this, they will revert to using their mother tongue often, specifically when they fail to identify a particular grammatical rule or word in the second language. They will understand that literal translation may not work in all cases. They might also understand that reality can be seen from several perspectives and that human minds formulate concepts differently. They will realize that their mother tongue works differently from the second language they are learning.

Housen and Pierrard (2005) believe that most Arab students’ errors are due to performance mistakes, mother-tongue interference, or false intra-language analogy. Therefore, contrastive analysis, 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. According to Howatt and Widdowson (2004), this analysis is used in Applied Linguistics to understand the differences and similarities of sentence structure between two or more languages. Teachers use contrastive analysis to understand the transfer and shift from one language to another and to compare the foreign language with the native one to adopt methods and techniques to meet the individual student’s needs (Byram, 2000; Gass & Selinker, 2008).

Abisamara (2003) attributes the sentence structure and word order in Arabic to the stylistics of the Qur’an, the holy book of Muslims, the main model for the written Arabic language. As a result of the influence of the stylistics of the Qur’an, “writers aim at rhythmical balance and coordination, with the split between subject and predicate occurring midway in a sentence” (p. 39). In addition, coordination is preferred over subordination, and sentences usually begin with *and* or *so*. Regarding word order, Arabic is V-S-O, verb- subject-object. In contrast, the word order in English is S-V-O, subject-verb-object. In addition, Arabic uses “that clauses” (e.g., \*I want that you stay), but English uses infinitives (e.g., I want you to stay). Adding personal pronouns to verbs is normal in Arabic, meaning Arabic learners of English might produce phrases like: *\*My father he lives in California*. While using relative pronouns, there is no human/nonhuman distinction, and the pronoun object remains in a restrictive clause as in the following sentence: *\*Here is the student which you met her last week*. In addition, a singular noun is used after a numeral above ten: *\*He has eleven cousin*.

There are many differences between Arabic and English regarding verbs and verbals. For instance, there is an equivalent of the auxiliary do in Arabic, but no verb to be in the present tense, no modal verbs, and no gerund or infinitive forms of verbs. The following sorts of errors appear in the writing of Arab students as a consequence of these verbal syntactic differences: *\*You have a brother?* ; *\*They going to the movies*; *\*Where the post office?*

In addition, perspectives of tense and time in Arabic differ from English. For example, the past perfect is formed with *to be*, and the reported speech keeps the original. The simple present tense in Arabic covers the meaning of the simple and progressive tenses in English. Therefore, it is unsurprising to see errors resulting from these differences, such as: 1. *\*They were eaten*. 2. *\*She said she is leaving*. 3. *\*She working now*. \**She working every day*.

While adjectives precede nouns in English, they follow them in Arabic (e.g., *\*a book interesting long*).

The article system also differs. In Arabic, the indefinite article does not exist (*\*He is student*), and the definite article (al-) is used in contexts where it is not used in English like days of the week, some months, some place names, and many idiomatic expressions. This difference results in utterances such as:  *\*He went to the Peru*; *\*He is still in the bed*.

On the textual level, Ahamed (2016) highlighted the differences between Arabic and English essays regarding the concluding sentence in the paragraph and the concluding paragraph in the essay. The conclusion in Arabic essays should bring something new, while it should match the topic sentence in English. Arab students are unfamiliar with the circular structure in the English essay where the topic sentence and the conclusion have the same idea since the conclusion in Arabic has to bring something new.

When Muslim Arabs make appointments or contracts, they usually say *ʾIn shāʾ Allāh*, which means with God willing, implying that only God knows the future and is the only one who will determine whether the contract or deal will be carried out. Similarly, the name of God is often placed at the top of pieces of writing, thus attributing everything to God’s will (Al-Khatib, 2001). Qaddumi (1995) illustrates how the culture is manifested in hospitality and making deals and contracts. He explains that at the beginning of such interactions, Arabs offer drinks such as tea and coffee without asking the guests, assuming that guests will accept without hesitation. In this way, the host and guests play their assigned roles within this context, which God has dictated and requires no explanation. Qaddumi’s cultural illustration resonates with how Muslim Arab learners of English seem to draw on cultural beliefs in their writing (Abu Rass, 2013; Qaddumi, 1995). For example, belief in God is unquestioned. Because Arab society is based on an assumption of shared values and beliefs, writers often assume readers will agree with them (Derrick & Gmuca, 1985), and the clarity and the need for supporting a claim by a proof usually valued in English language writing are less of a priority.

Another influence on Arabic writers of English is the discourse style of Arabic, characterized by the “use of imagery, metaphors, and simile in a beautiful clear manner,” with modern rhetoric in Arabic often more associated with literature and fiction more than academic writing (Qaddumi, 1995, p. 158). Regarding Arab academic writing in English, early studies such as Kaplan (1966) observed that speakers of Arabic transfer rhetorical patterns from Arabic into their English writing, citing that Arab students’ paragraph development is based on a complex series of parallel constructions. The Arabic text organization is “circular and non-cumulative” Allen (1970) (as cited in Sa'adeddin, 1989, p. 36).

In previous research, I observed that Arab Muslim students in Israel seem to experience the same challenges mentioned by some scholars who examined difficulties faced by Arab students writing in English (Abu Rass, 2015). In particular, it has been observed that these learners have difficulty producing cohesive texts, especially linking the ideas and sentences, and presenting evidence-supported arguments, often leaving readers perplexed. This is evidenced in the extract below, in which an Arabic-speaking learner in a first-year writing course for future EFL teachers was asked to explain why she chose to study English at the college where she is enrolled:

English is global language it is used everywhere and it’s the language you’ll be able to use most widely, as it’s spoken in more countries than any other language.

I love English from childhood I spent all my time at Disney’s channel watching programs and cartoons in English after I grew up I decided to learn English and to raise a society who loves it.

Actually there is no specific reason that made me to choose XX collage. My sister studied here English courses she advised me in it. I asked about the collage, I saw it and I liked it so I registered in.

The student responds to the writing prompt by listing the pervasiveness of the English language, her love for English, and her sister’s advice/own impression of the college. The response is difficult to follow for several reasons. Firstly, there is no overall hypertheme (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004) to assist the reader in understanding the purpose of the piece of writing. It is assumed that the reader can connect the writing prompt and the response. Secondly, in the first paragraph, there is no connection between the content and the purpose of the response, which is to explain why the learner chose to study English. The reader is left to make this connection on their own. Following this, without any transition, the learner explains her love for English based on her childhood experiences, yet the cause and effect are left implied. The third paragraph is another abrupt transition, in which the learner provides two reasons for selecting this college, though it is unclear whether there is a connection between the two reasons (her sister’s advice) and her own impression. In summary, this response lacks cohesiveness, both in its overall organization as well as in its logical unfolding.

Given that this was the first essay (E1) written in the course, it is reasonable that creating cohesiveness would be a challenge for the learners, as they had been exposed to very little writing instruction during secondary school, whether in Literary Arabic (L2), or Hebrew (L3), or English (L4) (Amara & Mari, 2002). In this case, a marked improvement in creating coherence can be seen in the following extract from the first part of her final essay (E2):

Online education is a convenient way for acquiring education. Online education is a type of educational system that is delivered through the internet to students using their home computers. There is a lot of benefits for online learning such as availability, low-cost, and time-saving.

First of all, unlike the traditional education, online courses are easy accessible. Online courses can be pursued by anyone who has access to an internet device from any place of the world. For example, when someone lives in rural areas and he cannot attend the university because it’s probably located tens or hundreds of miles away, online programs will give him the chance to achieve his dream.

The use of a clear hypertheme helps the reader understand the purpose of the essay without having to rely on the prompt, as in E1. The first paragraph describes online education and suggests three benefits. The second paragraph sets out to espouse the accessibility of online education, backing up the claim with an example. Overall, it can be seen that the student has progressed in creating coherence yet still requires further refinement. For example, in the first paragraph, the reader is told of the benefits of online education and then what it actually is, albeit realized through an awkward repetition of the theme “online education,” thus obfuscating the relationship between the two sentences. The second paragraph unfolds cohesively, moving from the claim that online courses are “accessible” to the example, clearly signposted by the themes of “first of all” and “for example”.

1. Contrastive Rhetoric

Contrastive Rhetoric (CR) compares discourse structures across cultures and genres (Kaplan. 1966). It studies similarities and differences between writing in first and second languages and aims to understand the influence of writing conventions in one language on the writing of the other (Connor, 1999). According to Richards and Schmidt (2002), the first language and culture usually affect writing in a second language, including discourse structure, topic, audience, and register. It also relates to theories like applied linguistics, linguistic relativity, rhetoric, text linguistics, discourse types and genres, literacy, and translation (Connor,1999).

1. Error Analysis

Error analysis is “the process of determining the incidence, nature, causes and consequences of unsuccessful language” (James, 2013, p. 2). It can account for almost all errors second language learners make, including those resulting from the first language and others unrelated to the learners’ native language. Diagnosing and identifying errors are the most important steps for understanding the second language acquisition process and helping learners learn it better (Saville, 2006). Error analysis is used to study learners’ errors, indicating sources of errors and making inferences about the language learning process. It helps writing instructors and learners as well. Instructors can learn more about the complexity of the writing process of their learners, and learners can be made more consciously aware of their problems. Thus, they are different from mistakes, which are unsystematic deviations (Coder, 1981).

Some second-language acquisition pioneers conducted research studies in the sixties and seventies of the last century to understand errors and their sources. For example, Corder (1967) highlighted that language learners’ errors are important to study because they reflect the state of the learners’ knowledge. Corder (1967) added that errors are not just something to be eradicated but can be important in and of themselves as developing features for language learners. Corder (1974) called for analyzing errors systematically by language learners would help them focus on areas that need reinforcement in teaching. Selinker (1972) introduced the term interlanguage. It refers to the systematic knowledge of the learned L2, which is independent of the learner’s first language and the target language.

1. Conclusion

This chapter concerned the sources of EFL college students’ writing difficulties in general, with those of Arab students in particular. Inter-language refers to first-language interference and is the main cause of writing problems among EFL learners, especially at the early stages of learning English. Negative transfer happens when L2 differs from L1, and EFL learners transfer their first language habits, systems, or rules, which affects them negatively in acquiring the rules of the target language. However, positive transfer occurs when the influence of the first language positively affects the acquisition of the target language, leading to immediate acquisition.

Intralingual errors are developmental ones that reflect the structure of the mother tongue and generalizations based on partial exposure to the target language. In this case, the learner derives rules from the language they are exposed to and may develop hypotheses that relate neither to their mother tongue nor the target language.

Another source of errors among Arab students is the huge difference between Arabic and English. The two languages differ in their writing systems, sounds, pronunciation, capitalization, articles, writing style, and cohesion systems. In addition, English is written left to right, and Arabic is written in the opposite direction. Moreover, the sentence structure in both languages is different. Other differences include word order, nouns and pronouns, verbs and verbals, adjectives and adverbials, and articles. Moreover, they adopt different cultural patterns and modes of thinking.

The discussions in this chapter show the importance of employing contrastive analysis and contrastive rhetoric for teaching writing. The former helps learners understand the similarities and differences of grammatical items in both languages, predicting their errors. The latter highlights similarities and differences between L1 and L2, and the influence of L1 and its culture on the learning of L2.

Error analysis is a technique for studying learners’ errors, pointing at their sources, and making inferences about the language learning process. It benefits teachers and students. In addition, error analysis reminds learners of the influence of their first language and culture on their writing. Moreover, it helps them internalize that literal translation does not work often, and they must first understand the context.

Chapter 3

Errors at the Sentence Level

1. Introduction

This chapter explores three main types of errors at the sentence level, syntactic, semantic, mechanical, and their subdivisions. It starts by discussing the importance of changing teachers’ perspectives on errors, from a negative view to a more positive one. A distinction between errors and mistakes and local and global errors follows. The literature review also includes categories such as syntactic, semantic, mechanical, and subcategories of errors provided by different scholars come after. While syntactic errors include grammatical as well as phonological and morphological errors, semantic errors relate to meaning and occur at the sentence and word levels, specifically word formation and affixation. The third type of error is mechanical, which includes capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. Sources of errors are also identified as inter-lingual (first language interference), intra-lingual (developmental errors), and as resulting from the peculiarities of English as the target language. An analysis of my students’ errors is provided after the theoretical discussions. The analysis includes all categories and subcategories of errors described in the theoretical section.

1. Types and Classification of Errors

For many years, second language teachers considered student errors undesirable and to be avoided (Touchie, 1986). However, in the twentieth century, this perspective started to change, and educators started to view errors as a natural phenomenon in second/foreign language acquisition. Errors are now considered an index of language development and a valuable insight into student difficulties to be addressed (Ilani, 2016; Gass & Selinker, 1984).

As it is explained in Chapter 2, there is a difference between mistakes and errors. While the former is a slip of the tongue that could be self-corrected, the latter is systematic, occurs repeatedly, and the learner is unaware that they are incorrect (Corder, 1976, 1971). Only teachers or researchers can identify them (Gass & Selinker, 1994). Other researchers like Dulay and Burt (1974) also distinguish between local and global errors, claiming that local errors do not hinder communication as utterances remain comprehensible. In contrast, global errors are more serious since they interfere with communication and distort the meaning of utterances. While local errors include noun and verb inflections, and the use of articles, prepositions, and auxiliaries, global errors involve incorrect word order in a sentence. Errors committed by language learners cover all language components: the phonological, the morphological, the lexical, the syntactic, the semantic, and the pragmatic. While some scholars call errors of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling errors mechanical (Swales, 2005), others call them substance errors (Abisamara, 2003; Napitupulu, 2017). The term *mechanics* is used in this chapter to refer to these types of mistakes. Detailed information about language errors and their possible sources can be found in Chapter 2.

Brown (2007) covered four language components and provided other subcategories to these two errors: phonology or orthography, semantics, grammar and discourse. While phonological errors refer to errors regarding the sound, such as mispronunciations and misspellings, orthography refers to errors in the written systems of the language, like punctuation, and typographic, that result from illegible handwriting. Semantic errors relate to the meaning of utterances and sentences, including vocabulary, and grammar errors relate to syntactically acceptable or unacceptable syntactic errors, including morphology. Discourse errors include two categories: pragmatic and receptive. Pragmatic errors occur when learners fail to express meaning in a second or foreign language. Receptive errors refer to misunderstanding a meaning.

Other scholars like Dulay et *al*. (1982) discussed the surface structure of texts and divided them into four categories: a) omission, b) addition, c) misformation, and d) misordering. James (1998) adds blending as a fifth category. Omission occurs when a learner leaves off necessary items that must appear in a well-formed utterance, such as morphemes and inflections in nouns and verbs, articles, auxiliary verbs, and prepositions. In contrast, addition refers to items that should not appear in grammatical forms. While the third category, misformation, relates to using the wrong form of a morpheme structure, the fourth, disordering, refers to placing morphemes incorrectly in utterances like \**He is all the time late*. Blending occurs when writers combine two grammatical alternatives to produce an ungrammatical blend.

Brown (2007) also classified language errors into four categories: addition, omission, substitution, and ordering. Addition occurs when the user adds an inappropriate language item, such as an auxiliary verb. Adding the auxiliary do in the following interrogative sentence is an example of addition: \**Does John can sing*? An example of omission appears in the utterance of \**I went to movie*, where the definite article is omitted. \**I lost my road instead* of *I lost my way* is an illustration of substitution. Ordering errors refer to incorrect word order, as in the following sentence, \**I to the store went*.

Many studies have explored the causes of errors in EFL writers, revealing similar results in different parts of the world. For example, Napitupulu (2017) analyzed the writing of 75 second-year Indonesian university English literature students. The findings show that of the student errors, 42.4% were grammatical (tenses and articles), 26.7% were syntactic (subject-verb agreement and word order), 17.9% were substance (mechanical) errors, and 13% were lexical errors.

Similarly, Sermsook et al. (2017) conducted research to diagnose language errors in the writing of English major students at a Thai university. Results showed that punctuation, articles, subject-verb agreement, spelling, capitalization, and fragment sentences were the most frequently committed errors. Another study by Na Phuket and Othman (2015) explored the major sources of errors and their types in the writing of EFL Thai students. The results revealed that word choice, verb tenses, prepositions, and punctuation were the most frequent errors.

Over the last twenty years, research on errors made by Arab learners when writing in English has increased steadily. Hourani (2008) conducted a study to explore the common grammatical errors made by Emirati secondary male students in their English essay writing. The most common and salient grammatical were: passivization (65%), verb tense and form (22%), subject-verb agreement (25%), word order (11%), prepositions (15%), articles (10%), plurality (8%) and auxiliaries (3%).

Almahameed and Al-Shaihkli (2017) investigated salient syntactic and semantic errors that thirty Jordanian foreign language learners made when writing in English. The participants made syntactic and semantic errors. Syntactic errors included eleven types: verb-tense, agreement, auxiliary, conjunctions, word order, resumptive pronouns, null-subject, double-subject, superlative, comparative, and possessive pronouns. Verb tense errors were the most frequent syntactic errors at 33%. In addition, results indicated two types of semantic errors: errors at the sentence level and errors at the word level. The latter outstripped the former, scoring 82% to 18%. Moreover, comparative errors and errors in possessive pronouns were the least frequent.

Ababneh (2017) conducted a study of 50 female Saudi students in their fourth year at the University of Tabuk. Their errors were analyzed and classified into four categories: grammatical, syntactic, mechanics (spelling, capitalization, and punctuation), and lexical types. Findings reveal that the most frequent errors were grammatical, mainly tenses, singular/plural, and articles, followed by syntax (subject-verb agreement) and mechanical (spelling).

In a similar vein to this book, a study was conducted by Murad and Khalil (2015) investigating errors committed by 22 Arabic native speakers, four males, and 18 females, who were majoring in teaching English at Sakhnin College for Teacher Education (TE) in Lower Galilee in Northern Israel. The study's findings revealed that the participants made four errors: content and organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. The most frequent error type was language use, including word order, negation, copula and auxiliary omission, subject-verb agreement, and prepositions. They attributed the errors to negative transfer from L1 and overgeneralization.

The literature reviewed above discusses categories and subcategories of errors committed by EFL learners, which include three main components: syntactic, semantic, and mechanic. The following section introduces the reader to classifying these components and their subcategories.

* 1. Syntactic Errors

Syntactic errors include morphology, incorrect word formation, omission, misuse or addition in the plural, verb tenses, subject-verb agreement, modal auxiliary, relative clauses, fragments (run-on sentences- incomplete sentences), use of articles, prepositions, noun modifiers (the girls/these girls), and countable and non-countable nouns. The verb system in English and Arabic is a complicated grammar point. Examples of errors included the use of verbs or the omission of auxiliaries. In addition, Smith (2001) provided many examples of errors that Arabic learners of English commonly make, including mistakes in consonant clusters, word order, questions, negatives, auxiliaries, pronouns, time, tense and aspect, modal verbs, and articles, stating that “the indefinite article causes the most obvious problems as it is commonly omitted with singular and plural countable” (p. 205). Ababneh (2017) adds that examples of syntactic errors include the following categories: word order, subject-verb agreement, and the use of the resumptive pronoun in English relative clauses, which is illustrated in the following sentence: \**The boy that I saw him is called Ali*. This example indicates that Arab learners of English overgeneralize the resumptive pronoun in English, using *that* for human beings instead of *who* and *whom*. The tendency to use run-on sentences is an example of syntactic errors committed by Arab EFL students noted by Ahamed (2016).

Another research by Alhaysony (2012) examined the use of articles in the writing of 100 first-year Saudi female EFL students at the University of Hai’l based on the Surface Structure Taxonomies (SST) of errors. The findings revealed that omission errors, mainly omitting the indefinite article *a*, were the most frequent, and substitutions were the least frequent. However, omitting the indefinite article *an* was the least frequent error. The addition of the definite article *the* was the most frequent, which the author attributes to the fact that the definite article is more commonly used in Arabic than in English. Alhaysony (2012) concludes that the article system in English grammar is complex and that even the most advanced learners find it difficult to master.

Smith (2001) indicated many types of errors made by Arab learners related to articles, mentioning that “The indefinite article causes the most obvious problems as it is commonly omitted with singular and plural and plural countable nouns” (p. 205). The difficulty stems from the nonexistence of the indefinite article in Arabic, and the range of the definite article is different from English. Smith provided the following examples of the indefinite article omission by Arab learners of English: \**This is book*; \**He was soldier*; \**There are a books*; \**This is a rice*. They may struggle to correctly produce genitive constructions. For example, *John’s book* (in English) becomes \**book John* following the Arabic syntax (Smith, 2001). In addition, Arab students tend to use the definite article where it is not used in English, like \**At the sunset, we made the camp* and \**What would you like for the breakfast the Sunday*?

Al-Mohanna (2014) analyzed the compositions of four EFL levels at a Saudi university, freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors. The study identified Saudi students’ errors in using definite and indefinite articles. The findings suggest that most errors made by the four groups were classified as overgeneralization and simplification, omitting the indefinite article *a/an* and substituting the definite article *the* for the indefinite article *a/an* or Ø.

1. Semantic Errors

Semantic errors that refer to vocabulary and meaning pose another difficulty for EFL learners. However, the area has been scarcely researched. Basir et al. (2015) analyzed lexical errors committed by Malaysian students. The three major categories of lexical errors are wrong word choice at 41.56%, omission/incompletion at 20.78 %, and misspelling at 15.58%. On the other hand, redundancy, word formation, and collocation were less common at 6.49%, 5.19 %, and 2.60%, respectively.

Research on lexical errors among Arabic speakers who learn English is scarce. Sheshsha (1993) conducted research studies to examine the types of errors produced by 48 Saudi university students majoring in English. The classification of errors included five categories: confusion of words with formal similarities, confusion of words with similar meanings, inappropriate collocation, literal translation, and divergence.

Another study by Al-Shormani and Al-Sohbani (2012) examined Arab learners’ semantic errors in English, analyzing 30 essays written by Yemeni University third-year students majoring in English. The classification of the semantic errors identified in this study included three broad categories: lexical, collocation, and lexicogrammatical. Each one of these categories included categories and subcategories depending on the errors identified. The researchers identified 1388 semantic errors. Results show that the omission of letters category scores the highest number of errors, (251) 18.08%.

In contrast, misselection of a prefix category is the lowest, where only (12), (0.68%) errors were made. Their findings reveal that the subjects of this research tend to translate concepts, words, and phrases literally from Arabic as their L1 into English and apply Arabic linguistic rules to English. Similar results were obtained previously by Zughoul (1991), who analyzed lexical errors made by a sample of 128 Jordanian students at Yarmouk University and found that assumed synonymity is the most common type of word choice error made by his subjects (23.5% of the total number of errors).

Focusing on collocation errors as a part of lexical errors, Mahmoud (2005) analyzed Arab EFL learners and found 420 collocation errors. About two-thirds of these collocations (64%) were incorrect, and 80% were lexical collocations instead of grammatical ones.

Other studies examined the abilities of EFL Arab learners to use appropriate vocabulary. For example, Daoud (1998) studied the role of exchange strategies in improving Syrian English for Specific Purposes (ESP) learners’ writing skills and changing their attitudes toward the target language culture. Students exchanged essays with their American counterparts. Specifically, the subjects “wrote essays that reflected their personalities, lives, and culture or dealt with issues of international concern” (p.391). Results showed that the subjects could not provide appropriate vocabulary and expressions. In addition, some of them were found to be “aggressive in addressing their American counterparts” (p. 397).

* 1. Confusion of Sense Relations

Using a hypernym for a hyponym means using a general term instead of a specific one, where the meaning will be underspecified, for example, “we have modern equipment in our house,” where appliances would have been more appropriate.

According to Palmer (1976) (as cited in Jassim, 2016), the category confusion of binary terms refers to lexical items with oppositional relations, which usually shows the reversal of a relationship between items rather than oppositeness in meaning. Examples of binary include “antonyms as in *big and small*, complementary relations as *male-female* and directional relations as in *come and go*” (Jassim, 2016, p. 165). Al-Shormanil and AlSohbanil (2012) provided an example of this confusion between the words look and feel as binary terms as it appears in this sentence: “\**I look (feel) happy* and \**he feels (looks) happy*” (p. 1). Translation from L1 occurs due to the direct translation of a word, phrase, or sentence from the learners’ native language into English. The subcategory confusion of sense relations replaces the term “calque” with translation from L1 (James, 1998). According to studies by Zaghoul (1991) and Andre (2014), calque was the second most frequent lexical error in the students’ writings. While in Zaghoul’s study, calque accounted for 11.08% of the total number of errors, in Andre’s, it was 19.14 %. James (1998) affirms that calque is the result of literal translation due to the influence of the first language.

* 1. Collocation Errors

Many studies have shown that collocation presents difficulties for EFL learners. Collocation is the frequent use of a word or phrase that is used together with another word or phrase, which seems natural and correct for native speakers (Jassim, 2016). According to Channell (1981), translation from Arabic into English and the dependence on monolingual dictionaries that provide one-word synonyms without including explanations or examples can be a reason for incorrect collocations. James (1998), as cited in Jassim (2016), mentions the following three degrees of inappropriate collocation: “1. Semantically determined word selection (for example, *The city is grown*) developed. 2. Statistically weighted preferences (for example, *An army has suffered big loses* < heavy losses is preferred>). \* 3. Arbitrary combinations and irreversible binomials (for example, *hike- hitch* (hitch-hikes)” (p.166).

* 1. Stylistic Errors

Stylistic errors fall into three subcategories: verbosity, misuse of compounds, and circumlocution (Zughoul, 1991). To cover all areas of semantic errors and to allow for dual or even multi-classification for any error, the classification of lexical errors used in this section is drawn from different sources such as Hemchua and Schmitt (2006), and Zughoul (1991). This means that an error can be classified as developmental (intralingual) and first language interference (interlingual) simultaneously. While the first four categories were suggested by Hemchua and Schmitt (2006), the “confusion of binary terms” category was adopted from Zughoul’s (1991) classification. The other two categories, inappropriate meaning and distortion of meaning, were borrowed from Al-Shormani and Al-Sohbani (2012).

Most researchers classify lexical errors as L1 transfer as a separate category, which may include two or three subcategories, as in the case of Hemchua and Schmitt (2006), who included three subcategories: borrowing from L1, coinage based on L1, and direct translation from L1.

Affixation refers to creating a new word that results from derivation, which is part of the word-formation process, where two elements combine and one functions as the base (Moskowich, 2010). The new formation occurs by adding a derivational affix to a word (Montero-Fleta, 2011). It takes the form of prefixation by placing the prefix at the front of the base word, like *un*- in *unhappy,* and suffixation like the *-less* in *childless* and -*en* in *shorten*. “Incorrect suffixation or suffix error is one of the sub-classes in formal misselection that consists of synforms” (Hemchua & Schmitt, 2006, p. 19). Misselections of prefixes and suffixes among Arabic-speaking students have been noted (Al-Shormani & Al-Sohbani, 2012). According to Hemchua and Schmitt (2006), synform is categorized into two types: a) the same word class with a similar form (for instance, \**we can play an educator game*), and b) the inappropriate use of a particular word class (for instance, \**traditional musical instruments performed is being held*).

Al-Shormani and Al-Sohbani (2012) analyzed third-year Yemeni students’ semantic errors in English. According to the data of this study, 58 out of 81 suffix errors that occurred in the students’ writings were due to confusion about the same word class with a similar form, while 23 errors were attributed to the misselection of a particular word class. This finding suggests that the students have a more serious problem in selecting the correct word class due to similar forms rather than the proper use of derivative forms in words.

* 1. Mechanical Errors (Capitalization, Punctuation, and Spelling)

Mechanical (substance) errors refer to capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. (Ababneh, 2017; Almahameed Al-Shaihkli, 2017; Sermsook et al., Swales, 2005; Napitupulu, 2017).

* + 1. Capitalization

Another common mistake among Arab college students, especially beginners, is writing the initials of proper names and the personal pronoun *I* in small letters. For example, a significant proportion of students do not capitalize the initials of their first and last names as well as the names of cities and countries. Despite repeating the importance of capitalizing the initials of proper names and the personal pronoun *I*, it takes them some time to acquire the habit. In addition, some tend to capitalize initial letters in the middle of the sentence when it is not required.

* + 1. Punctuation

Punctuation poses another difficulty for Arab learners of the English language learners because, in contrast to English, Arabic has few limitations in the use of commas and periods (Ababneh, 2017; Ahamed, 2016). For instance, Arab students rarely use semi-colons and exclamation marks in their writing (Ahamed, 2016). They also tend not to use punctuation like in \**Your family but also others*, and they use commas instead of periods like \**in real world, In the home* (Ababneh, 2017). It is acceptable to write run-on sentences in Arabic. Sentences are written without punctuation marks, which is not accepted in English (Ahamed, 2016).

Many researchers, including me, have found that Arab students use commas inappropriately and excessively, transferring the stylistics of Arabic and overgeneralizing the rules for using commas. It is also not rare for them to insert a comma after the subject, like the example in the first sentence or the verb in the second sentence.

* 1. Spelling Errors

Since English and Arabic orthographic systems differ, Arab learners of English encounter difficulties mastering the orthographic system in English. The misspelled words included silent letters, vowels with different sounds, and different letters with one sound (Al-Khatib, 2017). In addition, the relationship between orthography and Arabic phonemes is more consistent than in English (Al-Busaidi & Al-Saqqaf, 2015).

Al-Busaidi and Al-Saqqaf (2015: 185) reviewed some research studies concerning spelling and pronunciation errors among Arab students and provided a summary of these errors:

1) /eə/ as in <there> becomes /ei/ as in <they>.

2) confusion of some pairs of vowel sounds, as in /i/ vs /e/.

3) vowel length (short vs long sounds).

4) word stress–students may not know that word stress can change pronunciation (e.g., divide vs division).

5) inserting vowels initially or between consonants in syllable-initial positions, e.g., stop > \*/əstɒp/ or \*/sətɒp/.

6) intrusive vowels in syllable-final positions, as the /ə/ in \*/desək/ instead of /desk/ <desk>.

In addition, Touchie (1986) provided examples of errors made by Arab ESL learners that represent the three areas. For example, it is very common among Arab ESL learners to replace the phoneme /p/ with the phoneme /b/. Therefore, they might say and write \**pird* and \**brison*, for example, instead of *bird* and *prison*. The production of such errors as \**womans*, \**sheeps*, and \**furnitures* is an example of morphological errors. In another study, Ababneh (2017) attributed the following spelling mistakes, \**jolessy,* \**advais*, \**contry*, \**withe*, \**caulture*, \**spicialy*, \**pepole*, \**becose*, \**watsup*, \**somone*; \**neihboor*, to a lack of practice in the English language.

Qaddumi and Walweel (2018) examined the most common errors among Palestinian university students at Al Istiqlal University in Jericho, Palestine. Results show that correctly spelling the words was a major problem for these students (14% of the total number of errors).

In addition, Al-Busaidi and Al-Saqqaf (2015) investigated the problems that 94 Omani Arab university learners faced in spelling English vowels. The study focused on vowels in monosyllabic words because English vowels pose a challenge for Arab learners since Arabic and English languages differ in the number of vowels and the spelling and pronunciation patterns. The aim was to examine the students’ knowledge of spelling these basic words and avoid the influence of stress and intonation in multi-syllable words. Vowels appear to be more problematic and irregular than consonants. The perceptible mismatch between phonemes and graphemes might be the reason. A written spelling test and a dictation test were used for data collection. The study investigated 19 vowel sounds and their 47 letter realizations in monosyllabic words. The sound distribution included six short vowel sounds, five long vowel sounds, and eight diphthongs.

Comparing the students’ ability across the six short vowel sounds, results showed that spelling the sound /æ/ was the easiest and the /i/was the hardest. Regarding diphthongs, the results showed that the sound /ɔi/ (as in *boy*) is easiest, while the sound /eə/ (as in *bear* and *hair*) is the most difficult. It could be concluded that students found short vowel sounds easier than long sounds and diphthongs, which were equally difficult. The fewer realizations of short vowels could explain these findings.

Spelling problems are probably the most frequent category of lexical errors in EFL learners’ writings (Bouvy, 2000; Fernández, 1997). These are violations of the orthographic conventions of English. English has a low grapheme-phoneme correspondence. Therefore, EFL learners face the problem of coping with the complicated English orthography in which one sound, especially vowel sounds, can be rendered in multiple ways, and one letter can be pronounced differently. Double letters, silent letters, or triphthongs also cause problems for learners. The following misspellings are examples: \**beautifull*, \**verday*, \**ritting*, \**intelligent* for *beautiful*, *birthday,* *writing*, and *intelligent*, respectively. A particular type of spelling error arises from phonetic spelling, i.e., writing the words the way they are pronounced. The following examples illustrate this phenomenon: \**Reichel* for Rachel, \**keik* for cake, \**spik* for speak, \**braun* for brown, and \**saebyet* for subject.

In these two examples, graphemic and phonic similarity causes the misspelling of the word techniques. It means that the shapes of the two words are almost the same.

The template of Abisamara (2003) is adopted for data analysis since it is comprehensive. It includes all grammatical (prepositions, articles, reported speech, singular/plural, adjectives, relative clauses, irregular verbs, tenses, and possessive case), syntactic (coordination, sentence structure, nouns and pronouns, and word order), lexical (word choice), semantic (literal translation), and substance (mechanics: punctuation & capitalization, and spelling). Abisamara (2003) mentions lexical and literal translation as related to meaning. Therefore, other semantic categories were borrowed from different sources, such as Al-Shormani and Al-Sohbani (2012) as well as Zughoul (1991). For more information about the classification of semantic errors, please see Table 14.

1. Analysis of my Students’ Syntactic Errors
   1. Verb Tenses

All the following sentences are taken from the compiled data of first-year students. In the first category, the students lacked consistency regarding verb tenses. It is not uncommon among Arabic-speaking learners of English to narrate a personal experience writing about an event that happened in the past using the past tense and vice versa. While the first verb in the first two sentences is in the past, the second is in the present. However, the third sentence started with a verb in the present tense and continued in the past simple.

TABLE 1 Samples of my students’ verb errors

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Sources of errors** | **Examples** |
| Omission of the third-person inflection in the present simple. | 1. Every person in his crisis **need** help from others. (**needs**) 2. I think that everybody **need** your help as you need there help. **(needs)** |
| Past simple vs simple present verb tenses. | 1. I was the person who **take** the first bite and it was the worst cake I had ever eaten. **(took)** 2. For example, when I had a bad day at work, no one **notice** me, but she does. **(noticed)** 3. I hardly **hold** myself and luckily I didn’t laugh because our boss was furious. **(held)** 4. As always happens when two or more attitudes **contradict**, a huge competition occurred in the teaching field between online courses and orthodox methods. **(contradicted)** 5. I **try** everything to change him **but for nothing**. So please if anyone knows a solution for this problem let me know. **(tried)** 6. I have three goals that I want to achieve when **I'm** older. **(will be)** 7. The white uniform, that gave me a feeling that I am able to help other. **(fitted me well)** |
| Present/past perfect vs simple present/past verb tense. | 1. Her kindness is so special that I **never met** someone like her before. **(have never met)** 2. Students who are deciding to learn abroad in countries such as: Ukraine, Italy, and Germany have many consequences which **prevents** them to study inland. **(prevent)** 3. My aunt Dina is the most forgetful **that I ever know**. **(have ever known)** 4. Recently, smoking has increased among teenagers, which **lead** to negative effects on their life. **(leads)** |

* 1. Omission of the Verb “to be” and other Verbs

In the first two examples in the table below, the writers did not use the verb to be as required after the subject. In the third sentence, the verb should have followed the first noun phrase that functions as the subject of the sentence. Similarly, the fourth example lacks the verb *to be* and a relative clause. The verb to be should come after the noun phrase (another example), which is also the subject of the sentence. In addition, the relative clause links the two subjects in the sentence. Examples (5), (6), and (7) lack not only the verb to be but also the complement that provides information about the subject. The following examples indicate first-language interference because there are two types of sentences in Arabic; one type includes a verb, and another does not. Therefore, it is acceptable in Arabic to have a sentence without a verb.

TABLE 2 Students’ samples of omission of the verb *to be* and other verbs

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Source of errors** | **Examples** |
| Omission of the verb ‘to be’ and other verbs | 1. Mahmoud now studying in Canada.**(is)** 2. For example, meat usually colored and flavored with preservatives*.* **(is)** 3. Another annoying behavior***,*** last month I went to grocery shopping. **(took place)** 4. Another example, my sister is a social person. (**Another example is that**) 5. For example, learning new words and phrases I need for bringing my English into a higher level.**(is and a complement)** 6. \*Second, being aware of everything new. **(is and a complement)** 7. Last, expressing your opinion. **(is and a complement)** 8. For example, headache, back pain, neck pain, and poor vision. (**The sentence lacks a verb and a** **complement)** 9. Although everything in their city is modern such as clothes, houses, market, but **they** still different. (**it is**) |

* 1. Subject-verb Agreement (Omission of Third Person Singular)

The following three sentences are examples of the lack of subject-verb agreement, where the subject is singular and the verb tense is present. In this case, the verb should end with *-s*, -*es*, or -*ies*. The students here omitted the -*s* at the end of the verb. Since there are no verb inflections in Arabic, the students do not see the importance of adding the -*s* to the verbs when the pronoun is singular. These could also be considered developmental errors.

TABLE 3 Samples of students’ errors of subject-verb agreement

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Source of errors** | **Examples** |
| Lack of subject-verb agreement | 1. For example, for somehow she ***succeed*** to send her car at the same month for three times to the garage. **(succeeds)** 2. Although her being a hard worker, she always end of quitting her job. **(ends)** 3. Although the government ***think*** this is the best solution for preventing this disease outbreak it is definitely won't work due to the rising morbidity every time that we emerge from the curfew. **(thinks)** 4. Last reason is, while it’s obvious that cell phones **is** great emergency,   **communications device** installing GPS locators, will lead you to direction and places. **(are; communication devices)**   1. The third one, is that the cell phones work on vibrations which **disrupts** brain cells throughout the days. **(disturb)** 2. No one**like** someone who is miserable except for other people who want to be miserable. **(likes)** 3. Watching the news with the motion pictures ***engage*** us more than reading newspapers. **(engages)** 4. She is an example for all the students ***who attends*** college to learn and grow. **(who attend)** |

* 1. Auxiliary Verbs

The following samples of errors show that Arab students have difficulties using auxiliary verb forms in English. The first example shows that they have not acquired the use of auxiliary verbs in negative past simple sentences, where the stem verb should follow the negated form of the auxiliary. Similar to errors in the categories mentioned above, first-language interference could be the reason for using auxiliary verbs incorrectly. Auxiliary verbs do not exist in Arabic.

TABLE 4 Samples of students’ errors in using auxiliary verbs

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Source of errors** | **Examples** |
| Auxiliary verbs | 1. When I got the exam, the material that I **didn’t learned** **for** wasn’t included. **(didn’t learn)** 2. We can find televisions these days almost in every home, and **it has** many advantages. **(they have)** 3. The computer is the most necessary thing that must be in every home. **It's have** a lot of advantages, however, it also has disadvantages. **(has)** 4. Students who **are deciding** to learn abroad in countries such as: Ukraine, Italy, and Germany have many **consequences**which **prevents**them to study **inland**. **(decide) (restrictions) (prevent) (in the country/Germany)** 5. Studies have shown that people who have a personal weapon with a permit **are use** it as a threat when a criminal assaults them. **(use)** 6. English grammar rules **are full of** exceptions. **(have many**) 7. Moreover, **it'sincreases** our words vocabulary. **(increases)** 8. For example, drinking energizers like XL-Blue, etc*.***are cause**damage health for the people. **(cause)** |

* 1. Modal Auxiliaries

Instead of including a stem verb after the modal auxiliary can, shall, may, and will and their forms in the past, could, should, might, and would, the writers used the verbs with suffixes indicating the past tense time in the first example and the present tense time in the second adding the suffix -s to indicate the first person singular. Similarly, students’ errors of modal auxiliaries could be attributed to interlingual and intralingual interference since Arabic has no modal auxiliaries. The fourth sample could be considered a developmental error since the learner overgeneralized using *have* instead of *has*.

TABLE 5 Samples of students’ errors of modal auxiliaries

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Source of errors** | **Examples** |
| Modal auxiliaries | 1. I**can considered** him of one of my family. **(can consider)** 2. Teaching assistant can relieves*.* **(can relieve)** 3. **It's have** a lot of advantages, however, it also has disadvantages*.* **(It has)** 4. In the first day I see Sereen at class, she said that **she have** a BA degree in Philosophy. **(she has)** 5. I wish **to will not think**about it anymore. **(not to** **think)** 6. I **will mentioned** some of them. **(will mention)** |

* 1. Relative Clauses

The following samples show that Arab students seem to transfer the use of the relative pronoun *that* in their English writing. In Arabic, the relative pronoun “الذي” is used for males and “التي” for females, and the plural forms for both are equivalent to the relative pronoun *that* in English. Regarding the relative pronouns, there is no distinction between human and non-human beings in Arabic, which contrasts with English, in which *who* is used for humans. This sentence also includes the following errors: subject-verb agreement, incomplete sentences, inappropriate use of commas, and capitalization errors. First, there is no match between the plural noun of the word *countries*, which is the subject for the relative clause that starts with who, and the auxiliary verb in the relative clause used in the singular form, where the auxiliary *have* should have been used. Second, it is not a complete sentence since it includes only the dependent clause. Third, the comma placed after although is not in the right place.

TABLE 6 Samples of students’ errors of relative clauses

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Source of errors** | **Examples** |
| Relative clauses | 1. My aunt Dina is the most forgetful **that I ever know**. **(who I have ever known)** 2. Although**,** Countries in the west **who has** a very strong education in collages and universities, and schools too. **(that have)** 3. Third, only Jewish experts and professionals write the exam, there are not any Arabic experts **that** check how much that exam match Arab students. **(who)** 4. I believe exams can be replaced by other alternative ways **whom** effects are much better. **(whose)** 5. No one **like** someone who is miserable except for other people who want to be miserable. **(likes)** |

* 1. Articles

Using articles is problematic for Arab learners since they do not exist in Arabic. Therefore, it is common for them to add the articles *a* and *an* where they are unnecessary. Students making these errors seem to not fully comprehend the logic behind having an article before a singular noun. They also insert it before plural nouns, which is not required. Some also are confused between *a* and *an* despite learning the rules at school. This is illustrated in the third sentence. Some also tend to omit the article, as in example four.

The inappropriate, excessive use of the definite article *the* also characterizes Arab learners’ English writing because the definite article is widely used in Arabic. It is called ال-تعريف. Etymologically, a proper noun is more likely to be definite in Arabic, specifically if it is an Arabic origin. In addition, it is used as a literal translation like *The United Kingdom* المملكة المتحدة or *The United States* الولايات المتحدة, as well as the other names starting with The United, The Union, e.g., UE الإمارات المتحدة, UN الأمم المتحدة. Similarly, the *al* is added to Arabized names of countries such as Al-Hind (India) and Al-Seen (China). The second word is usually definite in a genitive construction, but the first is never definite. Nahr Al-Urdun, the River Jordan, is an example of this.

TABLE 7 Samples of students’ errors related to articles

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Source of errors** | **Examples** |
| Articles | 1. Being able to learn at this course will give us the opportunities to learn how to write ***a* good paragraphs**. Next, after I graduate with my degree, I want to get a job as soon as possible and rent myself a nice apartment near a good libraries where all the great learning clubs and cafes in order to be more socialize with my friends and new people. **(good libraries)** 2. She had ***a* sad stages** in her life. **(a sad stage)** 3. Another **generations (generation)** 4. **An** successful English teacher **(a)** 5. My friend is **irresponsible** girl*,* **(an** **irresponsible)** 6. Wasim impressed me as a kind and ***a*** funny guy. **(a)** |

* 1. Fragments

Fragments are incomplete sentences that lack one of the critical components of the sentence to form a complete thought, e.g., a missing verb or a subject. Arab students commonly produce fragments since it is acceptable not to have a verb in a sentence. There are two types of sentences in Arabic: sentences with verbs and sentences without verbs. Therefore, Arab students may transfer the structure of Arabic sentences into their writing in English, ignoring the use of verbs, especially after the first noun phrase, which is the subject of the sentence. In addition, considering the audience by providing details seems to be a problem among Arab students who assume that readers will decipher the sentence’s meaning. In example 1 in Table 8 below, a missing verb in the sentence and a lack of logical connections between the first sentence and the second one makes the sentence a fragment, which poses difficulty for the reader to understand what happened in October 1925. The second example is a typical Arab sentence composed of clauses connected by commas. The writer connected the two clauses by placing a comma, making it sound awkward and strange. The third clause lacks the subject and the verb *to be*.

TABLE 8 Samples of students’ errors of fragments

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Source of errors** | **Examples** |
| An incomplete thought | 1. For instance, **the war of a stray dog, in October 1925**, a Greek soldier was shot after allegedly crossing the border into Bulgaria for chasing his runaway dog. **(erupted in October, *1925 when…)*** 2. My advice is don’t trust **irresponsible person** he will put you in trouble**,** and better to do what you want by yourself. (**an irresponsible person because he may put you in trouble, and it is better to do what you want by yourself.**) |
| A lack of a verb | 1. Another example***,*** my mom was traveling for work **so** we didn’t have food to eat***,*** I don’t know how to cook, but thanks to my father he tried cooking **and** fed us. **(Another example took place when my mom was travelling for work; we didn’t have food to eat. I don’t know how to cook, but thanks to my father who tried cooking to feed us.)** |
| A lack of a complete thought | 1. Because***,*** the admissions process in foreign countries is easier. (,**many students prefer to study abroad.** 2. Since English is an international language. **(, it is important to learn it.)** |
| A lack of a verb and a complete thought | 1. For example, manipulating their smooth voice tone, using flashcards to make it easier for us, and **reinforce** us each lesson with a candy bar. **(reinforcing; were successful strategies to make us actively participate in class.)** |
| A lack of a verb and a complement | 1. For example***,*** for the students who are old, work, or who live far away from universities. **(…, it would be more convenient to take online courses.)** |
| A lack of a verb, a subject, and a complete thought | 1. So***,*** to improve my analytical thinking and writing skills… **(I should practice writing academic texts.)** |
| A lack of verbs and independent clauses | 1. Besides to speak automatically without thinking and to improve my accent. **(I have to practice speaking with native speakers.)** 2. Because almost everything is going to be new for you. **(, I expect not to adjust quickly moving to a new town.)** |

The third sentence lacks a verb after the noun phrase (another example). In addition, using the comma to combine the two first sentences in this fragment is inappropriate, making it a run-on sentence. To end the sentence, a full stop should replace the comma. In addition, using *and* instead of the infinitive is not acceptable. Capitalizing *and* indicates that this Arab student is still not fully aware of the rules of capitalization. Although, this error could also be explained as a lapse of concentration.

The fragment sentence is not a complete thought since it only has a dependent clause and lacks an independent clause. The inappropriate use of commas interrupts the flow of the sentence. The incomplete thought includes only the subject of the sentence that consists of three phrases. It lacks a verb and a complement. In addition, it lacks parallelism because the writer uses two gerunds in the first two phrases and an infinitive in the third phrase.

Completing the thoughts in the two fragment sentences would require adding verbs and complements besides adding a comma after, *for example*; replacing the full stop after the word *universities* with a comma in the first sentence and adding a comma after the transition word in the second one. In example seven, the fragment sentence lacks a verb, subject, and complete thought. Similarly, the last two fragments that include only dependent clauses lack verbs and independent clauses.

* 1. Noun Modifiers and Irregular Uncountable Nouns

TABLE 9 Examples of students’ errors of noun modifiers and irregular uncountable nouns

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Countable/ uncountable nouns | 1. Despite the fact**,**that **a lot of**parents opposed the idea.**(many)** 2. One might say that there are many advantages of mobile phones, but you will find downsides too and there are **a lot**. **(many)** 3. In recent years the Internet entered our lives in one way or another and became necessary for simplifying needs and social lives, but with all the many benefits, it has brought **a lot of** negatives. **(many)** 4. **Informations. (Information)** 5. **Advices. (Advice)** |
| Countable irregular/ uncountable nouns | 1. I don't consider this as a smart way to examine the student's understanding of the material, because of the limitation on the time it cause **a pressure** on students, causing **a tension for him**. **(pressure; causing them to be tense)** 2. He needs **a special attention. Special attention** 3. **Mouses. (mice)** |

* 1. Prepositions

TABLE 10 Samples of students’ errors of prepositions

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Inappropriate prepositions | 1. We traveled to Germany yesterday **with** summer school. **(for)** 2. I always advise her to take care of her serious problem **by drugs.** She really needs. **(with drugs)** 3. Israa saw me. She came quickly, took the biggest bag and helped me **carrying it.** **(in carrying)** 4. …. who you can’t **trust** **on** her. **(trust)** 5. Television is a major part **in** our life, and it offers so many benefits. **(of)** 6. I always wanted to an English teacher **in this time** I am a first year student **in** Beit Berl College, ***in*** English major. **(currently; at; majoring in English)** 7. I believe that watching movies really benefits us **with** many aspects of our lives. **(in)** 8. Watching movies has a lot of positive benefits **on** our life and mind, that's not matter what movie's *genrar* is drama, horror or tragedy. **(in)** |
| Lack of prepositions | 1. She gave my mother, her savings in order to**pay** the course. **(pay** **for)** |

These errors may occur due to simplification strategy and overgeneralizing the target language rules.

* 1. Wrong Word Order

Wrong word order refers to “the incorrect placement of words in the utterance” (Larenas, et al., 2020, p. 21). According to Hevney (2013), English learners make errors in ordering the words in the sentences, incorrectly placing various parts of speech in sentences.

TABLE 11 Samples of students’ word order errors

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Wrong word order (The verb preceded the subject.) | 1. **In this war were killed** **about 13000 to 25000 people. (About 13,000 to 25,000 people were killed in this war)** 2. For example, drinking energizers like XL-Blue, etc**.** arecause **damage** **health** for the people. **(health damage)** 3. According to the **researching that happened** that this drinking caused diseases to the body. **(current research)** 4. Next, after I graduate with my degree, I want to get a job as soon as possible and rent myself a nice apartment near a good libraries where all the great learning clubs and cafes in order to be **more** **socialize**with my friends and new people. **(socialize more)** 5. After high school Besn worked **for two yearsdifferent jobs**. **(different jobs** **for two years)** |
| Repeating the subject | 1. Grandpa Ahamad, **he** past away 3 years ago I was 21 years old. **(he)** 2. Ayham **he** is my first and last love. **(he)** |

* 1. Errors of Comparative and Superlative

Larenas et al. (2020) included other categories, such as comparative and superlative adjectives, word order, and conjunctions. To compare two items or objects in English, a gradable adjective for the comparative or superlative degree is used in two ways: adding inflections of *-er* and *-est* to the base form or preceding the adjective with *more* and *most*.

TABLE 12 Samples of students’ errors using comparative and superlative

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Comparative and superlative | 1. I have to work **harder** on my confidence. **(hard)** 2. The **worse** thing is the low salary. **(worst)** |

* 1. Conjunction Errors

Conjunctions are linking words that link words, phrases, and independent clauses (Dunham & Summers, 1993; Chaer & Freeman, 1998). The seven coordinating conjunctions are *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet* and *so*, which join together nouns, phrases, and independent clauses. They can be remembered by the acronym FANBOYS.

TABLE 13 Samples of students’ errors with conjunctions

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Conjunctions | 1. The pupils enjoyed and liked my activities, **also the teacher**. (**and the teacher enjoyed my lesson too**) 2. As a first year student I have a lot of emotions, that I feel, **and** a lot of thinking, **and also** some amount of pressure. (**As a first year student, I have many emotions and a lot of thinking. In addition, I feel pressured)** 3. Everyone is telling me that college will be the best experience that you will have in your life **and** whatI am trying to do is not wasting it **and** have fun while studying hard **and** to make my parents proud like I always do.(**Everyone is telling me that college will be the best experience for you; so I am trying to enjoy this experience by having fun and making my parents proud of me as I always do)** |

TABLE 14 Samples of students’ semantic errors

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Idiosyncratic coinages | 1. These principles **are needed for** **emblements** in a foreign language class. (**being implemented)** |
| General term for specific one | 1. Violence in schools is a **hazardous**common phenomenon nowadays. **(dangerous)** 2. The first reason is that without exams, teachers would not be able to find the **flaws**of students whether they understand the material well or not. **(mistakes)** |
| General term for specific one | 1. Violence in schools is a **hazardous**common phenomenon nowadays. **(dangerous)** 2. The first reason is that without exams, teachers would not be able to find the **flaws**of students whether they understand the material well or not. **(mistakes)** |
| Overly specific term | 1. It’s a retroactive life that depends on hunting and fishing as their **eating source**. **(main diet)** |
| Near synonyms | 1. It is a **tiny** device, which enables us holding it every way. (**a little device**) 2. Drinking too much of coffee affects the person's body negatively for several reasons. People need to drink coffee in their daily life because it makes them more **watchful** and focused. **(alert)** 3. Another example, is that the required articles our lecturer sent to us by moodle **the first** of the year, helped us improving our reading skills. **(at the beginning)** 4. Another example, this course demanding to bring article every week. After that we **solve the question about it**. **(answer the question)** |
| Inappropriate co-hyponyms | 1. For example, when they wanted to show the gap between **ages**. **(generations)** |
| Calque/Translation from L1 | 1. There are three goals that I would like to **reach** in my life. **(achieve)** 2. Second, after **I take my certificate in English**, **I want to take a trip, travel around to see different countries, to explore my world that I didn’t see yet**, to experience new things and to live inspiring adventures. (**I graduate from the English Department; I would like to explore the world visiting some countries)** 3. I love the college atmosphere because I meet my classmates and my teachers in education that is a**beautiful** thing that makes me happy. **(good)** 4. Firstly, she **gives** **my family her** good manners and **hope**. **(raises my familywith good manners, giving us hope all the time)** 5. She is **the light that lit my life**. **(a good influence on me)** 6. She states that journals should be exchanged secretly and with **fake** **names. (pseudonyms)** 7. However, today I have learned all these important **rules and information. (techniques)** 8. The most important reason is **that all the world today uses the computer**because all the programs that it contains. **(computers are** **used all over the world)** 9. Second, there are some disadvantages that cannot be ignored, the easy access to information via the Internet this made the students lazy**of their duties of school**since they are able to download information without exploring their topic of research. **(to do their duties assignments given by teachers at school)** 10. Last reason is, while it’s obvious that cell phones is great emergency, communications device installing GPS locators, will lead you to direction and places. **(The last reason is the use of cell phones during an emergency. In addition, installing GPS in cell phones is essential to help drivers find home addresses and locations of places)** |
| Binary terms | 1. My main goal is to build a farm with a beautiful garden which **reminds in my grandfather** the past times of my grandfather, **and that what make life more optimistic and full of happiness**. (**to remember the past times of; achieving that goal will make me happy and optimistic**) |
| Inappropriate meaning | 1. The strange thing is that most of these accidents didn't occur while the person**dialing the phone**. **(was calling)** 2. **Increasing**my writing skills to an academic level, by attending this course I will gain so many benefits. **(improving)** 3. I **took** the decision of becoming an English teacher aiming to improve the level of English education as **I possibly** can regardless of the criticism that I receive for taking this path. **(made; possible as I can)** 4. Secondly, after the **departure of** the Coronavirus pandemic, I want to start on my dream work as a swimming coach to train young children with love and pleasure. **(disappearance)** 5. She **lost** the bus. (**missed)** 6. I hope that this **fabulous** course stays as we used to have. **(good)** 7. For example, **dedicating**time for reading all types of texts in order to make students more aware of language and vocabulary and, to give students writing tasks as well which, in turn, will expose them more to the language and enable them, as a result, to function better in it. **(allocating)** 8. Motivation can be described as the learner's **outlook** and attitude. **(point** **of view)** 9. To concentrate and to**give** attention on teaching and practicing the new words that are needed to use by learners is more suitable than only understanding meaning. (**pay attention)** 10. Feelings of **competency**, self-determination and joy in completing tasks (achievement motivation) are a personality **variable** which is known to characterize the intrinsically motivated learner. ***(*competence; feature)** 11. First, some **said** that Psychometric test isn't good **classification** tool because that isn't able to predict the chances of success at university and certainly doesn’t reflect intelligence or ability or IQ, but check specific skills that can be acquired by training and practice. (**argued; diagnostic*)*** |
| Distortion of meaning | 1. It was horrible for me to see all the **misplaced** teachers who didn’t suit this career and the expected performance level, and after one major experience with an English teacher who made me dislike English lessons. **(unqualified)** 2. The popularity of cell phones all over the world has simply **exploded**. **(sharply increased)** 3. To give another example, student can evaluate himself through the exam: It's called ***self Esteem***. **(self-evaluation)** |
| Collocation | 1. A **massive** difference in my writing **(big)** 2. As a teacher, taking the responsibility to my hands would be running a test **once in a while** to make sure that the material has been ***gone over*** at least once. **(occasionally; reviewed)** |
| Connotation | 1. He is a **shining** leader. (**prominent**) |

* 1. Mechanical Errors (Capitalization, Punctuation, and Spelling)

Mechanical (substance) errors refer to capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. (Ababneh, 2017; Almahameed Al-Shaihkli, 2017; Sermsook, et. al, 2017 ; Swales, 2005; 2017; Napitupulu, 2017).

* 1. Capitalization

Another common mistake among Arab college students, especially beginners, is writing the initials of proper names and the personal pronoun *I* in small letters. The following sentences show the inappropriate use of initial capitalization, which appears in bold.

TABLE 15 Samples of students’ errors of capitalization

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Capitalizing initials when it is not required | 1. Second, swimming improves my mood **S**uch as it makes me enjoy. 2. artificial **S**weeteners. 3. Also. **T**hey use it as it was from the Arabic language. 4. For instance, **M**any professionals and working-class people want to receive higher education, **B**ut they can’t because of their family responsibilities or lack of money. **(M; B)** 5. **f**irst of all there is no reason not to want to be happy. **(F)** |
| **Not capitalizing initials when it is required** | 1. **f**ashion contributes in enhancing self-expression. **(F)** 2. Victoria is my Jewish friend, I met her when I was working in **herzliya** last year. **(H)** 3. Yafa married, she has a little cute boy his name **h**amodi, **h**amodi has a shiny brown eyes and curly hair so cute too. **(H; H)** 4. The first time when I met **m**ark was about one year ago in writing class. **(M)** 5. To give one last example, recently **japan** has invented an ear explorer. **(J)** |

* 1. Punctuation

TABLE 16 Samples of student errors of punctuation

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Placing a comma after the subject | 1. Another instance***,*** is that this virus is not just a normal virus***,*** it will torture you before it kills you or give the immunity to it and keep you safe from others. **(Another instance is not just a normal virus.** **It will torture you before it kills you or give the immunity to it and keep you safe from others)** 2. His hobbies are**,** to play basket **Ball**, **and**to work with youth boys and help them that’s why he also decided to study youth at risk. **(His hobbies are to play basketball, to work with youth, boys, and help them. That’s why he decided to study youth at risk)** |
| Overgeneralization: placing a comma between the two parts of the subject | 1. I really feel that I was so lucky lately**, and** wish to continue like that. **(I really feel that I was lucky** **lately and wish to continue like that)** 2. Boyka jumped over my neighbour fence, **and** stepped over my neighbour garden and pissed all over the grass. **(Boyka jumped over my neighbour’s fence, stepped over my neighbour’s garden, and pissed all over the grass)** |
| L1 transfer:  Separating between clauses by a comma | 1. Nevertheless, these **government** **policy** of curfew didn't work in Israel***,*** there are still a large number of sick people who are hospitalized and many dead people from this terrible disease - Corona. **(Nevertheless, these governmental policies of curfew didn't work in Israel. There are still a large number of sick people who are hospitalized and many dead people from this terrible disease – Corona)** 2. Another example happened two years ago***,*** **t**here was an association that collected donations, clothes, and food for orphans. (**Another example happened two years ago. There was an association that collected donations, clothes, and food for orphans), (Another example happened**   **two years ago when an association collected donations, clothes, and food for orphans)** |
| L1 transfer:  Using a comma to separate clauses | 1. She is a kind person***,*** in any time I need her she always be by my side. **(She is a kind person. In any time I need her, she is always by my side)** |

Overgeneralization appears in sentences 3 and 4 where the writer inserts a comma to list items in a series without considering that there is only one verb in this sentence and the comma is not needed before and. In other words, they need to separate the two verb phrases that belong to the same subject by a comma as it appears in the following two sentences.

In other cases, the writers link two independent sentences by using a comma, transferring punctuation rules from their first language since it is acceptable to separate between clauses by using a comma. Also, they tend to replace the full stop at the end of the sentence with a comma. Besides that, example 6 shows carelessness in using a comma to separate between the dependent and independent clauses.

TABLE 17 Samples of students’ spelling errors

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Impeding comprehension | 1. After I met Yotam’s family, I was very happy and impressed by the new relationship we **belt** together. **(built/developed)** 2. Then I met Noor in the high school we had knew each other **bitter** and we make a strong relationship. **(better)** |
| Inappropriate meaning | 1. When I asked him why his father is forcing him to take the **wresting** class, he told me that **he wants to make a man out of him**. **(wrestling), (he wants me to be a responsible disciplined man)** 2. The end of the film is **hopeful**. **(spreading hope)** 3. However, if you like watching TV, I advise you **to reduce** **it** as much as you can. **(to watch it less)** 4. We can find televisions these days almost in every **home**, and ithas many advantages. **(house)** 5. Another example, is that the required articles our lecturer sent to us by moodle **the first** of the year, helped us improving our reading skills. **(at the** **beginning)** |
| Carelessness | 1. We can use it with more than one way as a result of the **tichniques** it has. (**techniques**) 2. He **laughted**, ate and **wispered**. **(laughed; whispered)** 3. To have the chance to be **proffissional(professional)** 4. Another example, this course demanding to **pring** article every week. After that we solve the question about it. **(bring)** 5. Watching movies has a lot of positive benefits on our life and mind, that's not matter what movie's **genrar** is drama, horror or tragedy. ***(*genre*)*** 6. GrandPa Ahamad, he **past** away 3 years ago I was 21 years old. **(passed)** |

* 1. Stylistic Errors

TABLE 22: Samples of students’ errors

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Verbosity | 1. Smartphones are one of the most **prevalence** devices these days, and at the same time it is becoming an addiction that affects teenagers negatively. **(common)** 2. Second, travelling has the power to make one **manufacture** a whole new character, a better **version** of himself. **(develop; image)** 3. It's a **retroactive life** that depends on hunting and fishing as their eatingsource. **(traditional way of life)** 4. Second, providing students with cultural **enrichment** is another example. **(background)** 5. To sum up, I would like to emphasize the importance of watching movies and also of avoiding those that might **mislead us. (affect us negatively)** 6. The most important reason is that anyone in this world is **ambitious** for having peace. **(looking forward)** |
| Circumlocutions | 1. I’m attending this course **to get my writings in English better. (improve)** 2. Also, we were in **the organization group of our class**, and I was his secrets’ keeper. **(the class committee)** 3. I study at Beit Berl Academic College, and this is my first year, but in the meantime I am trying to find a job that fits **my studying according to my limited time**. (**my schedule)** |
| Misuse of compounds | 1. First of all, because it shows us a different ***manner of style*** ***of life*** from a different culture. ***(lifestyle)*** |
| Redundancy | 1. Doctors turn to be a **basic and cardinal** element in saving patients' lives. **(essential)** 2. The pupils **enjoyed and liked** my activities, also the teacher. **(enjoyed)** 3. Emotions, vulnerability and personal issues are **contested and debated** issues among scholars and researchers who study education, its methodology and its connection to the child. **(controversial)** 4. First, the **marvelous and refreshing** weather that enables me to get out of the house and visit or hang out with my friends. **(good)** 5. Exams are useful. Besides, **it** contains **a lot of** advantages. **(They; many)** 6. I have **a lot of** goals that I'm looking forward to achieve, but these are my main ones. **(many)** 7. Hopefully I will fulfill **it** someday. **(them)** 8. Due to **this** activities they spend less time with their family members an schools work.   **(these)**   1. Yafa married, she has a little cute boy his name hamodi, hamodi has **a shiny brown eyes** and curly hair so cute too. **(shiny** **brown eyes)** |

1. Discussion

Data analysis in this chapter shows that Arab EFL students commit many mistakes in the three major types of mistakes, syntactic, semantic, and mechanic. Syntactic and semantic errors include many subcategories. However, mechanic errors only have three subcategories: capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the sources of the most errors are inter-language and intra-language. The former is first language interference manifested in negative transfer, and the latter is the students’ development level between L1 and L2.

Results of syntactic errors show that students have problems using verb tenses accurately. Their sentences include omission of the verb to be, omission of the -*s* at the end of the verb for the third person singular, and subject-verb agreement. Results also show that students make errors in using auxiliary verbs and modal auxiliaries. These results are in line with the findings of Smith (2001), Abisamara (2003), Hourani (2008), Ababneh (2012), as well as Almahameed and Al-Shaihkli (2017). Relative clauses pose another difficulty for Arab EFL students. Choosing the right relative pronoun to start the relative clause seems confusing; many students use the relative pronoun *who* for non-human objects and *that* or *which* for humans. These results align with the findings of Abisamara (2003) and Ababneh (2012).

Results also indicate that using articles could be a big challenge for Arab EFL students. In many cases, they ignore the need for the article *a* in front of a singular countable noun that starts with a consonant and *an* before a countable noun that begins with a vowel. In addition, they use the definite article *the* excessively. In many samples, the students inserted a before a non-countable noun. Previous studies by Smith (2001), Alhaysoni (2012), and Ahmed (2016) support these results.

Error analysis indicates that the students write run-on sentences and fragments frequently. It has been witnessed that they tend to write run-on sentences at the beginning of their studies at college, transferring the stylistics of their first language. Fragments are mainly committed when they form complex sentences. It shows their lack of awareness of including two clauses, an independent clause and a dependent one, to compose a complex sentence. As a result, many of their complex sentences lack a complete thought. Ahmed (2016) mentioned similar results regarding run-on sentences, and Smith (2001) reported similar findings regarding fragments.

Choosing the right preposition seems to be challenging for these students. Their mistakes in this subcategory are plentiful. Confusion appears in the use of all prepositions. These results match previous ones reported by Abisamara (2003) and Hourani (2008). Using the right word order seems to be problematic too. Data analysis also shows that Arab EFL students find it challenging to have sentences with the right order of words. While some samples include the verb before the subject, others repeat the subject, which indicates imitation of spoken language. Hourani (2008) and Almahameed and Al-Shaihkli (2017) mentioned similar results. In addition, it seems that comparative and superlative adjectives confuse this population. They may not distinguish between their uses. Such results align with those mentioned by Almahameed and Al-Shaihkli (2017). Misuse of conjunctions is manifested by the excessive use of *and,* as well as of the adverb *also* to connect sentences. Students often place the adverb *also* after the coordinator *and* to express addition. Placing a comma after the coordinator poses another difficulty. Students seem to be unaware that separating the two independent clauses with a coordinator is insufficient; a comma should precede the coordinator. Abisamara (2003) and Almahameed and Al-Shaihkli (2017) reported similar results regarding the tendency to overuse the coordinator *and*.

Semantic errors discussed by Al-Shomani and Al-Sobhani (2012) are classified into three broad categories, lexical, collocation, and lexicogrammatical. They include many subcategories, which affect or distort the meaning. The subcategories include misselection of a prefix and translating concepts and words from Arabic. Collocation was also mentioned by different researchers like Zoghoul (1991), Ababneh (2012), Sheshash (1993), Basir et al. (2015) and Ababneh (2017). While Sheshash (1993) investigated the confusion of words with formal similarities and others with similar meanings, Basir et al. (2015) examined errors of wrong word choice, omission, and word formation. The results of the analysis of my students’ semantics cover all of these categories and subcategories mentioned by these researchers and support their findings.

Mechanics or substance errors are the third category. It includes capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. Following the rules of capitalization consistently and systematically seems to be a problem for Arab students. While some tend not to pay attention to the rule of capitalizing the initials of their first and last names, others ignore the need for capitalizing the first letters of other proper nouns, like names of countries and cities. Apart from Abisamara (2003), whose results support mine, none of the researchers gave specific examples of capitalization errors. Punctuating the sentences properly seems to be a problem too. The students’ samples show the transfer of the use of commas from their first language, overgeneralizing their use, including them excessively, and placing them inappropriately after the subject. These results are in line with the findings of Abisamara (2003), Ahmed (2016), and Ababneh (2017). Spelling seems to cause the most difficulty for students as a subcategory of mechanics. The students make many mistakes, mainly choosing the right vowel. Replacing the consonant /p/ with /b/ is a common mistake among Arab learners of English. The committed vowel and consonant mistakes are attributed to the different orthographic systems of Arabic as the learners’ first language and English, the target language (Al-Busaidi & Al-Saqqaf, 2015; Al-Khatib, 2017). The results of vowel mistakes match those mentioned by Abisamara (2003) as well as Al-Busaidi and Al-Saqqaf (2015), and replacing the consonant /p/ by /b/ was noticed by Touchie (1986) and Abisamara (2003).

1. Conclusion

This chapter focused mainly on errors at the sentence level, considering them a natural phenomenon and even looking at them positively since they help language instructors understand their underlying causes. It started by differentiating between mistakes and errors. While mistakes are slips of the tongue that could be easily self-corrected, errors are systematic and repeated because the learner is unaware of them. In addition, it discussed local and global errors. The former usually do not obstruct communication and understanding the meaning of a word, but the latter interfere with communication and disrupt meaning. Examples of both types are provided too. For example, local errors include noun and verb inflections and the use of articles, prepositions, and auxiliaries, and global errors involve wrong word order in a sentence.

Errors at the sentence level are syntactic, semantic, and mechanic. Different researchers classified them and identified their sources. Syntactic errors include grammatical as well as phonological and morphological errors. Semantic errors relate to meaning and occur at the sentence and word levels, specifically word formation and affixation. They are classified into three categories: lexical, collocational, and lexicogrammatical. Each category has subcategories depending on the errors identified. The third type of error is mechanic, which includes capitalization, spelling, and punctuation.

For classifying my students’ errors in this chapter, I adopted the classifications of errors by different researchers. Classifying and analyzing the errors indicate the reasons behind committing such types of errors. Interlingual interference, which refers to first language interference, is the main reason. Intralingual interference, which includes developmental errors in the target language, is the second reason, followed by the students’ limited knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary and lapses in concentration.

Data analysis covered all of these above mentioned categories and subcategories, which shows a wide range of errors committed by Arab EFL students at college level. Being aware of all of these samples and possible sources would be helpful for English language teachers to understand the difficulties of their students, their language problems, and their sources, hoping to find ways to help them overcome them. More information about how to help Arab students overcome their difficulties in writing in English, writing texts that are syntactically, semantically and mechanically acceptable in English is available in Chapter 8.

Chapter 4

Errors at Paragraph Level

1. Introduction
   1. Paragraphs and Paragraphing

A paragraph is a group of sentences that develop one topic and are related to each other. Stern (1976) defines a paragraph as “…a sequence of structurally related sentences” (p. 225). Similarly, Warriner (1988) defines it as “a group of closely related sentences” (p.43), and Oshima and Hogue (1999) as “a basic unit of organization in writing in which a group of some related sentences develops one main idea” (p.17). Other scholars have similar definitions. For example, Philline (2015) defines it as a self-contained unit of discourse that deals with a particular point or a single idea, consisting of sentences closely related to each other that develop one point. As guidelines for preparing students for EFL writing, the following recommendations may be useful. Bailey (2011) defines the paragraph “as a group of sentences that deal with a single topic” (p.78). The content of a paragraph should not go beyond the main idea mentioned in the topic of the sentence (Reeves & Leventhal, 2012). The length of a paragraph varies according to the type of text but should not be less than four sentences (Bailey, 2011). It is marked off by indenting the first line. Indentation marks the first line of a new paragraph while extra space is entered between paragraphs to indicate a break in discourse. Generally speaking, Arabic writings separate paragraphs by spaces even though indentation is very rare in original Arabic writing” (Alqinai, 2013; p. 4). Based on these definitions, it could be summed up that a paragraph consists of several sentences related to one topic or idea. According to Owusu (2020), paragraphs have different functions, such as giving adequate focus to the writer’s message and facilitating the identification of ideas.

Paragraphing is an essential element in the writing process (El-Rufai & Salim, 2015), which gives the reader a direction for developing the ideas, grouping and organizing them (Zinsser, 2006), and it helps the reader to get insight into a text (Coe, 1988). “Well-structured paragraphs help the reader understand the topic more easily by dividing up the argument into convenient sections” (Bailey, 2011; p. 77). Every paragraph should have one developed idea stated in the opening sentence of the paragraph, which should be developed using various ways and connectives to unify the content (Emerson, 2005). O’Donnell and Paiva (1993) emphasized presenting the ideas in the paragraph in a logical order using transitional words or connecting words to indicate the relationship between ideas.

1. The Structure of English Paragraphs

Well-formed paragraphs in English tend to comprise three main parts: a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a conclusion (Ahmed, 2016; Reeves & Leventhal, 2012).

* 1. Topic Sentence

The topic sentence is a general statement with a topic and a controlling idea. While the topic is the subject of the paragraph, the controlling idea delimits the content of a paragraph. Mayers (2006) The topic sentence outlines the main idea of a paragraph and “implies its purpose to explain, narrate, compare, describe, tell cause or effect, demonstrate or argue or tell steps in a process” (Alice & Mayers, 2005; p. 5). The topic sentence presents the topic of the paragraph and limits it to one or two areas (Oshima & Hogue, 2006). However, most contemporary scholars limit it to one area. It also indicates the purpose of the paragraph to the reader. The controlling idea should not be general; it should express the specific idea to be explored.

In an example provided by Alice and Mayers (2005), “*Smoking is bad*” is considered too broad to be a useful topic sentence, whereas “*Smoking advertisements are a harmful influence on children*” is considered a good example of a topic sentence (p.5). Alice and Mayers (2005) also included examples of good topic sentences that begin by presenting a comparison to then be explored in the rest of the paragraph, e.g. “*My sister’s personality is completely different from mine*” and topic sentences that describe cause and effect, e.g., “*Smoking results in thousands of smoking-related deaths each year*” (p.5).

Topic sentences are usually placed at the beginning of the paragraph. They can, however, sometimes appear in other positions, such as in the middle or at the end of the paragraph (Ahmed, 2019; Bailey, 2013; Driscoll & Brizee, 2010; Warriner, 1988). However, Emerson (2005) stresses that placing the topic sentence at the beginning of the paragraph is necessary to set the scene for the reader (Reeves & Leventhal, 2012).

* 1. Supporting Sentences

Supporting sentences or details follow the topic sentence to further explain and support it by providing specific information (Alice & Patricia, 2005; Hogue, 2008; Warriner, 1988); reasons, examples, facts, statistics, and quotations to support its claims (Ahmed, 2019, Emerson, 2005; Forlini et al., 1987; Reeves & Leventhal, 2012); definitions, restatements and summaries (Bailey, 2011), and incidents (Forlini et al., 1987). While examples show specific instances of a general idea, reasons defend the opinion presented in the topic sentence (Forlini et al., 1987). The authors add that incidents refer to giving a brief story or some events to illustrate the main idea. Supporting sentences could narrate, describe, show examples and reasons, or illustrate an incident.

Graham and Perin (2007) stress the need for standard written English to include appropriate vocabulary, correct spelling, capitalization, and sentence structure. They also emphasize the need for planning paragraphs to have a well-organized piece of writing. Paragraph organization is essential for comprehending texts. The lack of organization in paragraphs makes them difficult to be comprehended (Owusu, 2020).

* 1. The Concluding Sentence

The concluding sentence ends the paragraph, reviews the topic sentence, and offers a final thought. It wraps up the content of the paragraph, giving it a sense of completeness (Warriner, 1988). It could be expressed in many forms (Rumsek, 2003; Strauch, 2005): a restatement of the main idea (Warriner, 1988), a summary of the points mentioned in the paragraph (Rustipa, 2016), or repeating the topic sentence in different words. It indicates the end of the paragraph, summarizes the main points of the paragraph, and offers a final comment on the topic, allowing the reader to think about the most important ideas mentioned in the paragraph (Rustipa, 2016). It is important to restate the main idea using synonyms (Owusu, 2020). According to Strauch (2005), there are five types of conclusions: 1) a restatement of the main ideas of the paragraph, 2) a summary of its main points, 3) a look to the future, 4) a related thought that grows out of the body, 5) a combination of several types of conclusions. According to Hogue (2007), including conclusion signals such as *in brief*, *in short*, *in conclusion*, *to summarize*, or *to sum up* can be helpful.

1. Elements of a Paragraph

Three main elements determine the quality of the paragraph: unity, coherence (Driscoll & Brizee, 2010; Oshima & Hogue, 2000; Salakpi, 2020) and completeness (Driscoll & Brizee, 2010; Sekyi-Baidoo, 2003). A paragraph is complete when the supporting sentences fully explain the topic sentence, including minor supporting sentences needed to explain each major supporting sentence (Reid, 2000). Hence, the paragraph is complete when it has a completely developed structure.

* 1. Unity

Unity refers to the need for a topic sentence in every paragraph, around which all other sentences revolve (Oshima & Hogue, 1999; Strunk & White, 2000). “Every sentence in a paragraph should be directly related to the main idea,” according to Warriner (1988, p.48). Each sentence must relate to the theme. Any sentence that does not support the topic sentence breaks the paragraph’s unity. To achieve unity, the supporting sentences must develop and support the main idea in the topic sentence (Ahmad, 2019; Forline et al., 1987). Paragraph unity cannot be achieved if the supporting details are irrelevant to the topic sentence. In addition, paragraphs should be logical to the reader (Reid, 2000).

* 1. Coherence

The second element is coherence; it occurs when a series of sentences develop the main idea (Adelstein & Pival, 1980). To convey meaning successfully, the writer has to reinforce the main idea. In addition, the ideas should be clearly ordered and smoothly connected (Warriner, 1988), which makes the paragraph comprehensible (Driscoll & Brizee, 2010). Coherence is important to deliver the intended message. Holding the sentences together and moving from one sentence to another should be done logically and smoothly to achieve coherence (Oshima & Hogue, 1999). To achieve coherence, Oshima and Hogue (2006) suggest four strategies: repeating key nouns, using consistent pronouns, using transition signals to link ideas, and arranging ideas logically. Coherence requires writers to employ appropriate transitional words (Strunk & White 2000; Wyrick, 1999) and consistently use verb tenses (Salakpi, 2020). The use of connectors called transitional words or phrases that link one sentence to another achieves coherence Wyrick (1999). The ideas in a coherent text stick together, and one idea logically leads to the other.

Coherence also requires a logical arrangement of ideas. To have comprehensible academic texts, writers should logically arrange their ideas. Coherence is achieved by having a sequential arrangement of sentences (McCrimmon, 1967; Moe, 1979), and the reader’s background knowledge should be considered (Brown & Yule, 1983). Types of order include time or sequence, order of importance, order of contrast and comparison, order of problem, and order of position or place (Hogue, 2007). While time order relates to the chronological sequence of events, a sequence refers to spatial arrangement or pattern, which allows readers to visualize what is being described. The third type of idea arrangement is based on importance. This refers to discussing the ideas in terms of their importance. Contrast deals with ordering ideas by contrasting or comparing them. Ordering the problem requires writers to provide a solution. Writers are expected to discuss their ideas from the least important to the most important idea, leaving an impression of the importance of the last idea, opinion, or point on the reader.

In conclusion, coherence refers particularly to the logical connectedness of the ideas presented in the paragraph, manifested by the use of transition words or phrases, which are used to expose relationships among ideas such as (first, second, furthermore, on the other hand, for example, and in conclusion).

Cohesion refers to the way words and expressions are connected using cohesive devices. “It is a semantic one; it refers to the relations of meaning that exist within the text, and that define it as a text” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p.4), and it is based on reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion. While reference cohesion includes personal pronouns, demonstrative reference, and comparative reference, substitution, and ellipses refer to grammatical cohesion and are of three types: nominal, verbal, and clausal. Conjunction involves the use of conjunctive ties, and it is mainly grammatical with a lexical component (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Lexical cohesion involves using the vocabulary items in repetition, synonymy, antonymy, and collocation.

Hardy and Leuchtmann (1996) refer to cohesion as “expressions of continuity that exist between one part of the text and another, specifically reference, substitution, and lexical cohesion” (p. 237). Philline (2015) relates it to the grammatical as well as lexical relationships between the different elements of a text. Bailey (2011) defines cohesion as “joining a text together with reference words (e.g., *he*, *theirs*, *the former*) and conjunctions (e.g., *but*, *then*) so that the whole text is clear and readable” (p. 115). Cohesion also involves reference, ellipsis, substitution, conjunctions and lexical cohesion. They link the ideas together and remind the reader of what preceded and what will follow (Koutraci, 2017).

Repeating keywords in a paragraph is a tool for achieving coherence since it keeps the text’s focus clear. Avoiding the repetition of nouns, noun phrases, or names and using pronouns instead is another way to create a coherent paragraph since it helps writers to keep the flow of the sentences and the binding of a paragraph (Oshima & Hogue, 2006; Koutraki, 2015). Pronouns must be used consistently by person and number throughout the paragraph. If the word tourists is mentioned, the repeated pronoun should be *they*. Using pronouns consistently and systematically helps writers maintain the flow of the sentences.

* 1. Completeness

Completeness is the third element for having well-formed paragraphs. A complete paragraph includes enough information to develop the topic sentence. This information is expressed in supporting and concluding sentences (Reid, 2000; Rosen & Behrens, 1997). To ensure completeness, further explanation, evidence, and details should be provided to explain the paragraph’s controlling idea and substantiate the claims (Rosen & Behrens, 1997).

Several researchers have investigated problems facing EFL college students in developing paragraphs in English. For example, Owusu (2020) analyzed the paragraphs of 30 Ghanaian students to determine student problems in constructing paragraphs by comparing them to samples written by native speakers. Out of the students they surveyed 73,3% provided adequate topic sentences and 76.7% supported their topic sentences with adequate supporting sentences. The results in terms of adequate paragraph conclusions were less encouraging with only 23.3% succeeding in concluding their paragraphs properly. The main flaws were in providing concluding sentences and achieving coherence. Similarly, the research participants did poorly on sentence coherence and completeness.

McDaniel (1994) and Thep-Ackrapong (2005) mention similar problems among Thai students regarding the lack of expressing the topic sentence. They use the literal translation of Thai words into English. Unlike English, which requires starting each paragraph with a topic sentence, elaboration, and example, the Thai language allows beginning with a rhetorical question and answering it (Thep-Ackrapong, 2005); as a result, readers cannot see the point of the author until the end of the text.

Dipolog-Ubanan (2016) investigated common paragraph errors made by Chinese-speaking students in Malaysia. Besides analyzing the paragraphs of 30 Chinese students, the researcher interviewed 10 of them. Findings show that Chinese students tend to translate from their L1 into English when they write in English. These results correlate with the claims of other scholars and researchers like Liu (2008) and Wang and Wen (2002) who claim that first language interference is the main cause of Chinese writing mistakes. For instance, in Chinese, rhetorical indirectness for the sake of keeping harmony and avoiding impoliteness affects the writing of Chinese students in English, which makes it vague to the reader. In addition, the writer leaves interpreting the content and understanding its deeper meanings to the reader (Timina, 2013). Smerdov (2011) claims that Chinese learners of English usually “use the patterns borrowed from the locally produced textbooks, so the level of originality and creativity is predictably minimal (p. 226). They rely heavily on direct citations from books. In addition, their use of proverbs, maxims, and fixed expressions is easily noted in their writing (Chen, 2006). Findings of research studies that investigated problems faced by Arab college students in writing and developing their paragraphs showed similar results.

1. Problems Arab Students Face in Writing and Developing Paragraphs in English

Arab students tend to transfer the stylistic features of Arabic paragraphs to English paragraphs in terms of form and content. For example, they tend to write long sentences with coordinating conjunctions (Abu Rass, 2015; Al-Khatib, 2001), repeat themselves, and argue through presentation and elaboration, using a series of parallel coordinate clauses (Almehmadi, 2012; Derrick-Mescua & Gmuca, 1985). Repeating ideas, words, and phrases as a common strategy in Arabic is “a powerful, persuasive strategy and an essential cohesive strategy” (Johnstone, 1987, p.120). This feature is aurally developed in Arabic, which often displays a higher degree of repetition and redundancy (Sa’adeddin, 1989). In addition, they often talk around the topic and repeat phrases before stating the main points (Alsamadani, 2010; Al-Radwan, 2012; Kaplan, 1966; Youzbashi, 2016), including irrelevant information. Additionally, they face many problems writing good topics and concluding sentences, supporting details, providing examples, supplying reasons, using discourse markers, as well as choosing the right coordinators and transition words (Abu Rass, 2015). Findings of research conducted by Abu Rass (Al-Radwan, 2012; 2015), Eladani and Bedri (2017), as well as Kaplan (1966) confirm these claims that Arab students’ English writing is characterized by repetition and redundancy.

Unlike English, which starts with a general statement and a topic sentence supported by specific details, Arabic does not require that. Since indirectness is another feature of Arabic stylistics, their topic sentences are usually long and indirect, especially at the beginning of their academic studies. Moreover, it was indicated that Arab university students tend to follow certain techniques in their written English that make their writing incoherent, such as including a broad statement in the opening sections of their essays before introducing the topic sentence. As in other Semitic languages, “paragraph development is based on a complex series of parallel constructions, both positive and negative” (Kaplan, 1966, p.6). In English, the degree of subordination rather than coordination indicates maturity in the writing style. Kaplan concludes that it is not enough to master the grammar of English in order to write good compositions and papers. There is a need to master the logic of English too.

Writing well in English is not enough to “learn the basic structure of words, grammar, and sentences, but also that of discourse” (Weins Abu-Ali, 1993, p.6). In addition, Arabic paragraphs are usually longer, favoring an “equal-level thematic pattern” (Weins Abu-Ali, 1933, p.33). In addition, themes do not usually appear in initial positions. However, they are marked internally and externally. “Inter-propositional connectives are used as theme-marking devices to signal logical relations in Arabic texts” (p. 33). According to Bar-Lev (1986), the frequent use of coordinating conjunctions is similar in Arabic and American English. Fareh (1988) found similarities in the structure of paragraphs in Arabic and English, claiming that both tend to use a mono-level thematic pattern. In addition, the theme location in parallel paragraphs is the same. Moreover, they use attention-drawing devices and comparative expressions in the same way. However, collocations are more frequently used in Arabic paragraphs than in English ones.

Self-involvement statements are another feature of Arab students’ writing in English. Chafe (1982) explained this in terms of “involvement” and “detachment”. Involvement frequently occurs in speaking when communicators do not have enough time to plan their utterances; as a result, they use first and second-person pronouns very frequently to express empathy, which results in fuzziness. Sa’adeddin (1998) explains the high use of this feature by Arab students to express solidarity and create friendliness, warmth, and self-confidence. For example, they tend to include personal pronouns and emphasize people and relationships.

Developing paragraphs using topic sentences, concluding sentences, and supporting details is another challenge for Arab college students. Many researchers have investigated paragraph development among Arabic-speaking college students and reported similar findings regarding difficulties in writing appropriate topic sentences (Ahmad, 2010; Abu Rass, 2015; Alfaki, 2015; Al-zahrani, 2018). In addition, Arab students tend to memorize paragraphs instead of learning strategies for developing paragraphs (Abu Radwan, 2012; Abusharakh, 2012).

Elchachi (2015) investigated the writing of 16 EFL Algerian students and found that while many students could use English grammar accurately and write correct sentences, writing cohesive, clear paragraphs is challenging since Arabic and English have different rhetorical styles. Eladani and Bedri (2017) employed a descriptive-analytic method to analyze the writing of Sudanese EFL students, administering a questionnaire to one hundred teachers of English. Results show that students had difficulty stating the topic sentence clearly in their paragraphs. The results of the teachers’ questionnaire also show that most Sudanese students (76%) lack mastery of the controlling idea of the whole text. Their findings confirm Arabic interference since 99% of the respondents to the questionnaire agreed that Sudanese EFL students’ difficulties stemmed from the differences between English and Arabic discursive styles.

Ahamed (2016) identified and analyzed the writing errors of 20 Saudi EFL university students and found that 14 of the twenty students did not use transitional words, and 18 did not write a conclusion. The results suggest that students do not feel the need to wrap up the paragraph by providing a conclusion. Missing or inadequate conclusions in the paragraphs of Arab students could be attributed to the influence of the Arabic language because, in Arabic, a conclusion should bring something new, whereas, in English, it should generally reiterate the topic sentence (Ahamed, 2016).

Ahmed (2010) reviewed several research studies regarding cohesion that revealed that Arab students tend to include a broad statement before introducing the topic sentence, which makes their paragraphs incoherent. Moreover, they overuse coordinate sentences and misuse topic sentences, which renders their writing incoherent and unacceptable. Furthermore, they face difficulty using cataphoric and anaphoric references, ellipsis, substitution, and genre-related cohesive ties. While anaphoric reference refers to something mentioned earlier in the text, cataphoric refers to something that will be mentioned later. Ahmed (2010) attributes students’ problems in writing English to several causes, such as lack of topic-specific knowledge and their proficiency in English, claiming that students who demonstrate a low level of English proficiency pay more attention to language issues than to composing meaning.

Abu Radwan (2012) analyzed written text collected from 16 graduate students of three groups: six native English speakers (NES), five native Arabic speakers advanced ESL learners (NASA), and five native-Arabic speakers intermediate ESL learners (NASI). He focuses on four main rhetorical features in Arabic. These stylistic features are: “1) Loose packaging of information reflected in the frequent use of coordination and lack of subordination; 2) overuse of the definite article *the*; 3) circularity of organization reflected in the repetition of the same ideas and frequency of paraphrasing; 4) high frequency of personal-involvement pronouns and statements” (Abu Radwan, 2012, p. 374). Findings also show a high frequency of self-involvement statements by this specific group. In sum, this group used the three features mentioned above more than the other groups. In contrast, the writing of the advanced group of Arab students (Adnanced Native Speakers of Arabic-ANSA) demonstrated a similar pattern to the writing of native English speakers, suggesting that their L2 proficiency allowed them to use features of English rhetoric without relying on their L1.

Using transition signals that include transitional words and phrases (also called linking words or linking adverbials) to link between ideas is one of the most commonly used ways to establish coherence in a paragraph (Al-Khreshes, 2011; Barry, 2014; Koutraki, 2015; Oshima & Hogue, 2006). Using coordinating conjunctions appropriately poses another serious challenge for Arab students writing in English since they use them excessively. In addition, they usually express messages implicitly in long clauses with excessive use of *and*, *also*, *which*, and *that*, which leads to a lack of cohesion in English. The study conducted by Al-Khreshes (2011), who analyzed the writing samples of 120 Jordanian students, showed that Arab students are highly influenced by their first language, preferring coordination to subordination. Barry (2014) reported similar results when she analyzed writing samples of 38 Saudi students who had problems in different categories like conjunctions and the use of English conventions and word order.

Saud (2015) investigated the misuse of cohesive devices by Saudi students. The data was collected through an achievement test. A sample of 50 Saudi third-year English major students were asked to write essays in English. The researcher analyzed the essays using Halliday and Hasan’s (2014) model. The data analysis investigated the relationship between the use of cohesive devices and the writing score. They found that high-achieving students used more cohesive devices in their writing than weak students, with a preference for reference followed by conjunction and lexical coherence. The least frequent strategies were substitution and ellipsis. Concerning conjunctions, although students use them frequently, they prefer only the most commonly used conjunctions like *and*, *but*, *or*, *also*, and *so*, whereas the transition words *furthermore*, *in addition*, *moreover*, and *nevertheless*, seldom occur.

Similar results regarding the least frequent use of cohesive devices groups, substitution, and ellipsis, were reported by Abusharakh (2012) when he investigated problems and difficulties of cohesion and coherence among junior Palestinian college students at low, intermediate, and advanced levels in the writing of argumentative essays. For data analysis, the researcher followed Halliday and Hasan’s (1976) cohesion theory, Grice’s (1975) maxims for evaluating coherence, as well as Oshima and Hogue’s (1999) criteria for achieving coherence. Results show that the three groups tend to use lexical devices with overuse of reiteration by the intermediate and low levels, whose writing was also highly influenced by their first language. Negative interference was obvious in the writing of intermediate and low levels, which impedes cohesion and coherence. In addition, the subjects rarely used cohesive devices like substitution and ellipses at the three levels. Data analysis also shows that using cohesive devices does not necessarily achieve coherence, especially for intermediate and low-level students who cannot connect the ideas.

The aim of the study by Youzbashi (2016) is to investigate the use of cohesive devices in the compositions of Syrian undergraduate English majors, employing mixed methods, including the contrastive analysis method, to compare the products of EFL and Arabic language students on a similar task written respectively in English and Arabic. Three referees, who have extensive experience in EFL written composition, evaluated the quality of their essays. Results reveal that the paragraph writing skills of many EFL students still left a lot to be desired. Students employed many rhetorical features of Arabic in their compositions in English, such as agreeing on the point made by the writer, repetition, and providing a series of parallel coordinate clauses. In addition, lexical cohesion was the most frequently used type of cohesion in the sample students’ essays. Results also showed statistically significant results regarding the relationship between cohesion and coherence in the students’ essays. It means the more the students employed cohesive devices in their essays, the more these essays became coherent, which suggests increasing the holistic coherence quality of the students writing.

Conjunction seems to contribute to building this correlation between cohesion and coherence, specifically the use of additive, causal and temporal conjunctions, organizing the chronological order of thoughts. Using conjunctive cohesive devices helps the reader move from one idea to another smoothly. A high correlation was also found in lexical cohesion and coherence, which helped make their essays more coherent.

Ahmed (2019) investigated errors of unity and coherence in a paragraph written by Saudi students, employing testing and interviewing students. Findings reveal that students committed errors in unity and coherences. Their ideas were ineffectively organized, and their content lacked transitional markers. They also misused cohesive markers. Besides first language interference, their insufficient knowledge concerning paragraph unity and coherence in English was the source of errors in unity and coherence.

Completeness poses another challenge for Arab college students since frequent digression from the topic to new topics is frequent in Arabic prose and texts (Kaplan, 1966). Breaking in the middle of an idea or starting a new idea in the same paragraph are common features of paragraphs written by Arab students.

Cultural transfer poses another challenge for Arab students in writing in English since they tend to transfer their first modes and patterns of thinking from their first language. More details and examples of cultural transfer are included in chapter seven.

1. Data Analysis

The students in their first year of studies at the college are trained to write a short paragraph that consists of a topic sentence, some supporting details, and a concluding sentence, following the guidelines mentioned in the set textbook *Writers at work: A short composition* by Ann Strauch (2005). As mentioned earlier, the topic sentence should be a general statement that includes a topic and a controlling idea (or comment) like “Studying at the college is demanding”. While studying at the college is the topic, demanding is the controlling idea (comment). The students are expected to provide supporting details to support the topic sentence and conclude it, choosing one of the following samples of conclusions mentioned in the book on page 12: “1) restating the main idea, 2) summarizing the main points, 3) providing a look to the future, 4) including a related thought that grows out of the body, 5) combining several types of conclusions”. More information about instruction and practice could be found in Chapter 8. The analysis of students’ problems in paragraph development follows Halliday and Hasan’s (1976) classification, and the subdivisions follow the divisions of Ramasawmy (2004), and Bahaziq (2016). The following samples of data analysis are taken from the students’ written assignments.

* 1. Topic Sentences

TABLE 23 Inappropriate topic sentences

|  |
| --- |
| 1. I think of my close friend Hannah is my best friend even a sister because we grew up together, and we are almost the same age. 2. In order to teach English in the most efficient way, I believe that I must learn writing in the best way. 3. In my opinion, taking writing courses is not only important for learning English well, but it's also important to have it as a life skill. 4. We all agree that sometimes the government makes bad laws and policies. 5. Five months ago I got married and I moved to my husband's house, and there was a cement factory next to our house making noise. 6. When it comes to a writing course, as a student who's studying to become an English teacher it is an essential to take it for plenty of reasons. 7. My family started a business in Turkey five years ago, and we started to visit Turkey a lot, but then my parents decided to go live there for a couple of years. 8. Having an older sibling is wonderful, I have one brother older than me, He is so nice to me and he care a lot about me since I am his younger sister. 9. People were not ready for the pandemic; it took the governments a while to put the people under the fact that there will be a lockdown. 10. In my first year as a student I was a little nervous, but it is common for students to feel nervous in the first day. 11. In our Arab community, most of the pupils have difficulties learning English, maybe because it’s our third language or because teachers in the schools don’t give the English subject good attention, and I think both of the reasons affects in our pupils. 12. It is said that a person cannot choose his/her family, and if that is true – then it is even truer about one's mother! Let me tell you about my own dear mother, Mieko. 13. English for me is not just a language, its more than that, it’s a part of me, and it’s the thing that I really love. |

The students were trained to write topic sentences as general statements that include a topic and a controlling idea, but they felt the need to start the topic sentence with the pronoun “*I*,” adding the verbs “*think*” and “*believe*,” emphasizing self-involvement in the first two examples. In the third sentence, the writer started the topic sentence with an introductory phrase, *In my opinion*, stressing self-involvement. In the fourth sentence, the student started the topic sentence with the pronoun “*we,*” talking on behalf of others. Using the pronoun *we* in sentence, four is inappropriate in this context. It seems that the writer transferred not only the style of Arabic but also the mode of thinking since Arabs have a collective mentality.

In sentences five to seven, the writers included specific details to the topic sentence, which makes them lengthy. The first part of the sentences (8–11) could be good topic sentences, but the students chose to add unnecessary details to explain the controlling ideas. These details should be presented in supporting sentences. Long topic sentences also appear in sentences 12 and 13. The students were required to write about a person, starting with a general statement that has a topic and a controlling idea. The writer provided a long introduction in sentence 12 provides, repeating details. In addition, the student used a friendly style in sentence 12 by stating, “*Let me tell you*”.

* 1. Supporting Details

TABLE 24 Examples of inappropriate supporting details

|  |
| --- |
| 1. The worldwide spread of the internet has yet to cease, and so certain parties and individuals have begun taking steps to suppress or hold the spread of certain information, the majority of people refer to this as censorship, examples of it are as follows. 2. A nervous experience I had 2 days ago, My mom and I went to visit my mom's friend Manal, While we were sitting, Manal's husband got out of the room shouting at her, His Action was very aggressive, So me and my mom were surprised, He was yelling loudly and Claims that Manal should arrange his wardrobe for him. 3. At that time, when I saw that the child felt safe, I asked him as he knew what his mother's phone number was, so he told me yes, after I called her, she was crying, I told her hello, my name is Jasmine, your son is with me that he is safe, don't worry, just tell me where you are and I'm sati, she told me that she is in the Sultan Ahmed area told her that I am coming. 4. After my parents took me to the hospital, I was not feeling my leg, I was crying a lot because of the pain, and the doctor said that I have to put on a plaster cast on my leg. When I heard him, I was scared because it was the first time that I broke my leg, but at the same time, I started to enjoy it, due to I will be spoiled like how my brother was. 5. The second day begun and bad luck begun with it, most of taxi drivers ignored us when we called for them, every restaurant we went in has some weird atmosphere towards us I felt really uncomfortable. 6. For instance, Writing courses help students by doing their assignments. So it would be easier for them, To realize some of their mistakes that they are not aware of; Also correcting themselves. 7. Even though many students think that it is not crucial to take writing courses, since they might think that writing is an easy task to be done with only writing whatever they think of on a paper sheet, but the truth it is not. 8. At first, I said no then they forced me to go with them and if I don’t cooperate they will bring more police, my father start screaming at them and they told him to step away, then they toked me to an investigating room alone. |

In sentences 1 to 5, a series of clauses supports the topic sentence instead of providing examples and reasons. They lack signals to indicate examples and to add details. The students were trained to provide examples using specific signals like “For example, To give another example, The most dramatic example or One example was, Another instance was, and A recent illustration was” (Strauch, 2005, p.65).

In addition, they lack logical connections. In sentence 4, the supporting sentence is not well organized. All sentences that describe his actions should be grouped together. Being surprised should be moved to have a flow of related ideas.

The use of the transition word at the beginning of the sentence illustrates the sequence of the events in sentences 6, 7, and 8. However, the idea is not clear enough since the writers expressed what happened in a series of sentences without connecting them logically.

* 1. Conclusions

TABLE 25 Examples of inappropriate conclusions

|  |
| --- |
| 1. To make my goal happen I worked on it so much I didn't take knowing and loving English for granted I watched a lot of good English movies read a lot of books and even write sometimes, and English music never left my ear. 2. The last reason is, to deliver my main idea I should know how to structure the text or paragraph to make it easy for the reader to comprehend everything is mentioned. 3. Traveling and getting to know new places, that is beautiful at all times and weather conditions, but it has another special beauty and utmost ease in the summer. 4. I hope one day I can be a little bit more than her just because I always wanted to seem more a calm person especially around strange people. 5. Do your best to add anything that benefits your body and soul to have a better and much comfortable future. 6. I am a secretive person, but my mother is my only refuge, she taught me a lot of things about life, and I trust her without even thinking about anything, she is my blessed gift from God. 7. In conclusion, fast food is not good for our bodies and can lead to health problems, that's why I think its best if we raise awareness regarding to the matter. 8. In conclusion, energy drinks are harmful to health because they may cause weight gain, trouble sleeping, and even cause heart problems. So stay away from energy drinks, don't drink them, and stay healthy! 9. In summary I have just the good and positive ideas about Bet-Berl college. 10. Everything that student need is existed. when I am going to the College, I know that I feel pretty good, so I can make a lot of amazing things at my English classes. 11. Of course, I wanted to learn English because I like the language, and I wanted to be a good speaker with the help of my great teachers that I met at the college that I found them just what I expected them to be. 12. In addition, I chose Beit Berl College because, it’s close from my town, it has a good reputation and also the admission requirements were appropriate to me. 13. Finally, we all know without doubt about its teaching stuff holding PhD degrees and lots year of experience. |

None of the above concluding sentences is an adequate conclusion. To conclude the content of a paragraph in English, the students were trained to choose one of the above-mentioned types of conclusions.

The writer focused on one goal out of three in the first concluding sentence. She tried to summarize what had been mentioned before, but the concluding sentence lacks focus. In sentence 3, the writer mixes different topics. Instead of wrapping up the topic in the third sentence, the student added more unnecessary explanations, which could serve as supporting details. In sentence four, writing *“I hope one day”* is inappropriate. Sentence 5 sounds like preaching more than a conclusion.

While the sixth conclusion is very lengthy and includes too many details some of which do not even appear in the text, the seventh sentence could be a good conclusion if the writer knew how to combine both ideas. Despite using cohesive devices like “*in conclusion*” in sentence seven and “*in summary*” in sentence eight, these sentences could not be considered good concluding options. In sentence seven, the first part summarizes the harm caused by energy drinks, but the second part is more akin to preaching. In sentence eight, the sentence sounds rather like a slogan, providing general terms such as “good” and “positive”. Again, conclusion number ten is more general than specific. The student failed to link the availability of services and the amazing things she can do. Using “of course” in sentence 11 is inappropriate in this concluding sentence. The student here lacked the ability to link the specific things she mentioned about her desire to learn English and the reasons for considering her lectures great. The second part of the sentence sounds like a slogan. Using the cohesive device “in addition” in sentence 12 is inappropriate.

In conclusions, *to sum up*, *to conclude*, *in summary*, and *in conclusion* are appropriate cohesive devices to be used. While the first part is specific, the second is more general. The writer could not connect the three things she mentioned about studying at the college. Example 13 shows that neither the used cohesive device (*finally)*, nor the sentence concludes the paragraph. Besides having good lecturers, there should be two other reasons for choosing to study at Beit Berl College.

Analyzing the samples of conclusions shows that Arab students find it difficult to provide concluding sentences in English. Negative transfer could be the main reason for this difficulty. Many students, especially in the first assignments, do not provide concluding sentences at all. In addition, some of them start a new topic, like in sample sentence 4. While some conclusions are general ideas rather than specific, others sound like preaching. Using the phrase “*I hope one day*” is also inappropriate in a concluding sentence.

* 1. Transition Words

TABLE 25 Grammatical Cohesion

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Reference | Personal pronouns  Demonstrative reference  Comparative reference | I, my, you, he, she, it, they, we, our, yours, their, us, etc.  this, that, these, those, then, now, them, those |
| Conjunction | 1. Additive 2. Adversative 3. Causal 4. Temporal   e. Continuative | and, or, furthermore, similarly, in addition, moreover, besides, etc.  but, however, on the other hand, never the less, yet, etc.  so, consequently, for this reason, it follows from this, etc.  then, after that, an hour later, finally, at last, etc.  after all, etc. |
| **Lexical Cohesion** | Collocation  Anatomy  Synonymy  Repetition |  |
| **Ellipsis** | **Omission of an item**  Nominal  Verbal  Clausal | there is one there  do, does  the manager said so |

Table 26 Grammatical cohesion student examples

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Reference with personal pronouns | 1. I think English is a very cool and great language ever since I was little. 2. I think I have the qualifications to study this foreign language. 3. I believe that it will open up more work opportunities for me. 4. As he said to me this surprised him, but I think you have to learn, to live with them and enjoy traveling. 5. Technology today keeps changing for the better but it also has some negative sides, Despite that we still see technology as a main thing in life because we rely on it for almost everything and also because it makes things easier. 6. I enjoy meeting people from different cultures, and being their friends is so nice and the trip gives me the chance to try new things we don't have in our country. 7. I hope that this fabulous course stays as we used to have it. 8. We can find televisions these days almost in every home, and it has many advantages. 9. The world has evolved from our intelligence, and nowadays if you want to work you should write CV as well as introductory text. 10. Healthy eating can bring you a healthier life. 11. Moreover, writing can help you with your pronunciation of word. 12. At the first glance, she looks like a quiet polite innocent person, who has never been in a fight. 13. Something else I would mention about her, that she is very affectionate. For instance when she sees homeless children in the street without hesitation she helps them. 14. In addition, I can’t forget my fourth grade English teacher, thanks to her I loved English, she taught us in wonderful way she was friendly. 15. I spent two years of my life battling cancer I remember the first day they told me that I have cancer the doctors sat me down me and my family and told us that I have cancer. 16. When I was young my father bought for us two rabbits, they were so fluffy. |
| Demonstative references | 1. For example, drinking energizers like XL-Blue, etc.. cause damage health for the people. According to the research that happened that this drinking caused diseases to the body Another example of it harms on the financial aspect is that these drinks are expensive. 2. This year was difficult, and this experience was difficult for me. 3. I have recently thought about studying one semester in an American university, and that is for three reasons. Indirectness 4. On top of these reasons comes the staff. 5. However, today I have learned all these important rules and information. 6. This year was difficult, and this experience was difficult for me. 7. I have recently thought about studying one semester in an American university, and that is for three reasons. Indirectness 8. Now I write my ideas organized on a very limited time. 9. Now I finished learning in high school. |

The students were required to choose a topic like “traveling abroad, studying English, watching TV, eating healthy food, and drinking energizers, providing three examples. Analyzing the accumulated data of linguistic cohesion shows that the personal pronoun *I*, besides *you* and *we* are very commonly used. Students use these pronouns excessively, especially in the early stages of studying English at college. In addition, they express their opinions by using words like *think*, *believe* or *hope*. In many cases, they use the wrong reference. While the subject is *I*, the reference is *we* in some cases. Similarly, the singular reference *it* refers to the noun *televisions* in one case. In addition, *you* and *your* are excessively used. For example, when one student writes about the advantage of traveling, they use *you* instead of *travelers* or *tourists*. Data analysis also shows that Arab students tend to use pronouns and possessive pronouns like *they* or *her* without referring to a specific point.

TABLE 27 Conjunctions

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Conjunctions  likewise, furthermore, in addition, thus, therefore, because, etc. | 1. Second, this college is the closest to my hometown **so** I could go and return home in a short time, **and** **because** I can't sleep out of home. 2. When you decide to learn something neither in college or university you have to do a research about the subject you want to learn and to find the best place who can give you the information and the best experience. **So** you can start your profession with confidence, that you took every skill you will need in your future career. 3. I love kids and I can deal well with them, I can also deal well with working under pressure. **So**, all these things made me sure of what I want to become – a teacher. 4. **Because** there is no summer breaks or exams break and students will not have a yearly schedule that they have to follow 5. Recently, students are more tending for studying abroad. **Because,** the admissions process in foreign countries is easier. Despite the fact, that a lot of parents opposed the idea. 6. **Because** of that they end up committing suicide. 7. First, **because** I get a praise from the teachers and cute comments from the pupils that I taught them in the elementary school. 8. First of all, **because** it shows us a different manner of lifestyle from a different culture. 9. First, **because** the pizza was full of hot cheese, ketchup, vegetables and a lot of olives. Everything I like in eating pizza. 10. Finally, **because** my best actor "Brad Pitt" was there. 11. **Because**, first of all, I love it, **so** I know that I’m going to be teaching something that I love, plus, I’m very good at English since junior high school. 12. Even though I missed it, **but** I'm glad that chapter of my life is closed. 13. **Although** everything in their city is modern such as clothes, houses market, **but** they still different. 14. Getting my driver’s license was an exciting venture and life changing experience, **but** it is also a big responsibility. (**On the one hand…on the other hand**) |
| Additive | 1. **And** I hope that I made the right decision. 2. **And** fear showed on my face, I lost a little girl away from her family. 3. **And** when someone decide to learn a new language he start by learning the alpha pet of the language and how to write them then he began to write those alphas’ in order to write a word then step by step he become able to put sentences together then he can read those sentences and write paragraphs. 4. It is useful **and** I can take it to any place that I go to with me and use it wherever I am. 5. I believe that if the person loves what he is doing he will succeed in it, **and** I love English **and** I believe that I will be a great teacher. 6. I drove fine also in front of the elementary school. 7. In addition, responsibility prevents me to be late and also makes me a serious person. 8. I notice that without studying **and** also B. A certificate I can't have a good job. 9. I drove fine also infront of the elementary school, **and** I parked the car as it should. 10. The pupils enjoyed and liked my activities, **also the teacher.** 11. I lost my thoughts and my concentration, **also** it affected my comfort level. 12. The educational atmosphere is so comfortable for me, **also** this college had the best lecturers. 13. My family and I had just finished doing renovations at home, **also** me and my sisters completed all of our exams at that time, and so it was a tough time for all of us. 14. Technology today keeps changing for the better but it **also** has some negative sides, Despite that we still see technology as a main thing in life because we rely on it for almost everything and also because it makes things easier. |
| Adversative | 1. **But**, my mother stood by me for six months and helped me with every step to challenge my fears and difficulties. 2. **But** that didn’t stop me. 3. I think that is an additional reason **but** I don’t care about money that much **but** I care more about my comfort in my career. 4. We used to have a lot of fun to gather **but** after we finished high school our meetings became less and less, but we tried to keep in touch as hard as we can but it still difficult. 5. Choosing what I want to be when I grow up didn’t came just from the fact that I love English and teaching **but** it also came because throughout all my three stages from elementary school to high school I have noticed that half of my classmates had trouble with English. |
| Causal | 1. **So I hope** someday I will become that teacher that brings back that passion for learning English and maybe even make them a better teachers than me. 2. **So, I hope** it will be a good choice for me. 3. We as English teachers must learn and master everything about English such as the writing and reading, so we can benefit our students. 4. I did not want to waste my time waiting to become twenty to be accepted at the university. **So** I started searching an appropriate educational institute. **Therefore**. 5. Once more example in the noise of the factories in my city, **so** the people who live close to the industrial zone suffer from the noise that done by the factories. (**Therefore)** |
| Temporal | 1. Another example, this course demanding to bring article every week. **After that** we solve the question about it. 2. This environment relieves us **after leaving** the long lectures. 3. **After** becoming a teacher I’ll achieve my second goal, it’s about building my family, getting married, and have kids. I would like to get married after finishing studying in college and being graduated. Also, let my children study and became good and successful people who have a family and a great job. 4. Therefore, in 2015, and **after** a lot of confusion, I finally made up my mind to purchase and learn English. 5. **After** two hours I remembered that I should turn off the oven when the meal disappeared. 6. Add to that English is an international language spread and common to all the peoples. **Then** I was so interesting and curious to study this subject. 7. At the hospital, I was shaking and couldn't handle myself**. Eventually**, the doctors gave her the exact treatment she needed. 8. **Finally** I hope I'll succeed on this department and achieve what I want to be a great teacher. |
| Continuative | 1. **It was before seven months**, and I remember I was very nervous that day, and excited in the same time because it was my first driving test. (**Seven months ago)** 2. **Before the test**, I took a driving lesson to prepare myself from the mental and the physical side. (**Before taking the test**) |

The samples show that Arab students use the additive conjunction *and* excessively and place them as sentence initials inappropriately, which is not acceptable in English. The additive adverb *also* is used as a transition word that links ideas in English. However, Arab students use it for adding nouns and adjective phrases.

Although many students use causal conjunctions, still, they do not use them appropriately. All of the sentences that include the subordinate coordinator *because* are incomplete. The writers did not complete their thoughts by adding the effect of the reasons. In addition, the use of *so* and *but* in the adversative category is not acceptable in English. Moreover, some samples also show that they do not distinguish between contexts.. All above sentences that include *so* reflect the inappropriate use of the causal. It connects two simple sentences to show a cause and its effect in English. However, Arab students place it in the initial position of the sentence using it instead of *as a result* and *therefore*.

Similar to the coordinator *and*, *but* is overused and placed as the initial word in the sentence, which is unacceptable in English. In addition, it is used to illustrate the relationships between the ideas presented appearing more than once. Instead of using *in fact* in the above sentence to stress the fact they tried to keep in touch, she used *but,* and the third *but* could be replaced with *although* to sound better in English. Moreover, some sentences show that students do not precede *but it also* with the *not only* as in “*Getting my driver’s license was an exciting venture and life changing experience, but it is also a big responsibility*”. Using the comparative conjunctions *on the one hand* and *on the other hand* shows the relationship between the two ideas much better than using *but*.

The temporal conjunctions *after*, *then* and *finally* are used to show a sequence of time events, but none of the sentences reflect that. The conjunction *after* is used incorrectly. It should be *two hours later*.

To show the continuity of events, the writer used the sentence “*It was before seven months*,” instead of the introductory phrase *seven months ago*, which is acceptable in English.

Besides the above examples of references, repeating the subject was also noticed among some students.

Others deleted the subject when they linked between two sentences using *but* and *also*.

TABLE 28 Lexical devices

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Collocation | 1. After the train stopped **I got out from it** and I felt dizzy and some pain in my head. (**got off)** 2. Then I ran quickly to her **even I didn’t wear my shoes**. (**barefoot)** |
| Antynomy | 1. In recent years the Internet entered our lives in one way or another and became necessary for simplifying needs and social lives, but with all the many **benefits**, it has brought a lot of **negatives**. **(advantages; disadvantages)** 2. One might say that there are many advantages of mobile phones, but you will find **downsides** too and there are a lot. **(disadvanatges)** 3. In addition to all the **positives** I mentioned, there is also a very high percentage of **negatives.**   **(advantages; disadvantages)** |
| Synonymy | 1. My family were there **supporting me**, and **giving me some faith and strength to trust myself**. 2. We had a great time and rode some really scary and fast roller coasters, which was stupid thing for me to do because I get **dizzy** **and** **faint** from fast coasters. A situation of **fear and panic** happened to me two years ago in the vacation with my friends. 3. One day I woke up feeling **tired** and **sleepy** but I didn't care and headed out to get him to work. 4. I was very **excited** and **happy** to finally get to see the attractions that I always wanted to see. 5. Third type of bullying is physical bullying involves **hurting** or **hitting** someone’s body. |
| Repetition | 1. My last main reason for **happiness** is that **happiness** makes me a better person. 2. One more reason is big cats are **strong**. **Strong** is always charming. 3. For example our neighbor has a dog that is always **barking**. His **barking** is so loud and whenever someone passes by their house the dog attacts the gate and starts barking. 4. Another instance of noise pollution in our **neighborhood** is the little kids in the **neighborhood**. The little kids are really loud and they are always screaming and crying, and their parents can be heard yelling at them often. 5. Disease that baby may have, raped women, poverty and pregnancy among teenagers are strong reasons that give legitimacy to **abortion**, and of course we can find many other reasons that allow **abortion**. 6. To give another example, there is a new **phone** coming up which is called the iPhone x. This **phone** is so intelligent because it can respond to a tap, a voice, and even a glance 7. The other reason is the big **Bazaar**. In this **Bazaar** there are many interesting stores and things to see, everything you think of is there. 8. For instance, in the past they used to hold their baby and **shake** him until he sleeps, but nowadays they can put their baby on a modern bed which moves by itself and **shakes** the baby until he falls asleep. 9. Maybe he or she can’t do anything because of the **high speed**, in other words the **high speed** prevents the driver from acting and skipping the problem quickly, then the results will be bad. |

TABLE 29 Substitution

|  |
| --- |
| 1. Although many people are against **abortion**, many women choose this **operation** for their unwanted pregnancy. 2. The most important goal for me to achieve, is to buy **the car** that I love which is **Camaro**. I love the **car Camaro** from my childhood. It is my dream car. 3. In almost all religions, a woman is not permitted to **have an abortion**. If they **do**, their religions will punish them. 4. I've experiences while **I had to** **teach** my brothers or some kids something new. They always seemed happy when I **did so** |

TABLE 30 Ellipsis

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Omission of an item | One might say that **there are** many advantages of mobile phones, but you will find downsides too and **there are a lot**.  I recommend everyone to have a computer, **but** to know how to use it in the correct way. Second, the movie contains variety of nature and places scenes; also has different people actors and variety of their generation. |
| Clausal | For many students, going to college far away from their hometown doesn’t make an obstacle but for me it **does** because I have other responsibilities that require a lot of my time and one of them is my daughter. |

The least used cohesive devices are substitution and ellipsis. Only the most advanced students could use substitution; however, the samples show they had not fully mastered its use, including the right tense in the second sentence. In the first sentence, the student used the passive voice, “*is not permitted to have*” and in the sentence that follows, she used the present simple “*If they do*”. In the second example, the auxiliary *had* in “*I had to teach*” is followed by the past simple *did*, which causes a lack of cohesion.

1. Discussion and Conclusions

My data analysis shows that providing a good topic sentence, supporting details, using the appropriate signals and cohesive devices, and including a concluding sentence in English is a significant challenge for Arab students. Most problems stem from negative transfer, transferring features of Arabic like repetition, indirectness, use of a series of clauses, circularity of organization reflected in the repetition of the same ideas, and frequency of paraphrasing. These results correlate with the findings of different scholars from the twentieth century until the twenty-first century, such as (Abu Rass, 2015; Ahmed, 2016; Al-Khatib, 2001; Almehmadi, 2012; Derrick-Mescua & Gmuca, 1985; Johnstone, 1987; Kaplan, 1966; Sa’adeddin’s, 1989). In addition, the claims of Ahmed (2016) and Qaddumi (1995) support the research results concerning starting a new topic in the conclusion.

The results regarding talking around the topic and repeating phrases before stating the main points are in line with the the observations of several scholars (Alsamadani, 2010; Al-Radwan, 2012; Kaplan, 1966; Youzbashi, 2016), as they are for including irrelevant information (Abu Rass, 2015; Al-Radwan, 2012; Eladani & Bedri, 2017; Kaplan, 1966).

Results also show a high frequency of self-involvement expressed by the excessive use of the pronouns *I* and *we*, especially among students with low English levels. The explanation of Sa’adeddin (1998) for the high use of this feature by Arab students to express solidarity and create friendliness is relevant here. Findings also show loose packaging of information reflected in the overuse of coordination and lack of subordination, which are features of Arabic that are transferred in students’ writing. These features include the excessive, inappropriate use of the additive conjunction *and* as well as the adversative *but*. The results of several scholars support these findings (Abu Radwan, 2012; Al-Khreshes, 2011; Koutraki, 2015; Oshima & Hogue, 2006). Omitting the subject in their sentences could be an example of informality, transferring the spoken style into writing.

Regarding cohesive devices, data analysis shows that the most common devices used by Arab students are reference, conjunction, and lexical cohesion, and the least frequent ones are substitution and ellipsis, as Abusharakh (2012) and Saud (2015) reported. Comparative references are almost not used by Arab students. The samples in the lexical category of synonyms and repetition also indicate repetition. The use of the antinomy category is also limited. It includes only advantages and disadvantages, positives and negatives. Results also show that Arab students tend to convey their messages implicitly, avoiding explicitness in their writing and assuming that understanding writers’ messages in the readers’s responsibility. These results correlate with the findings of contrastive analysis (Almehmedi, 2012; Derrick-Mescua & Gmuca, 1985; Mohamed & Omer, 2000). These results align with many research studies regarding transferring not only the stylistics of Arabic in the writing of Arab students but also their modes of thinking that stem from the Arabic-Islamic culture, which promotes collectivism and unity. Therefore, some concluding sentences sound like preaching, a feature of the Arabic language used by religious leaders. In addition, the use of *we* stems from the cultural modes of pattern and collective mentality of Arabs. More examples of the influence of the Arabic-Islamic culture in Chapter 7.

Chapter 5

Errors at the Essay Level

1. Introduction

This chapter discusses errors made by Arab EFL students when writing essays. I begin by presenting various definitions of an essay. I describe how essays are typically structured and analyze the problems Arab students encounter when composing essays. I then discuss different essay genres, such as expository, problem-solution, comparison and contrast, and persuasive essays. These genres are practiced in writing courses that form the data for this study. An analysis of students’ essays follows, including error descriptions and explanations. Helping Arab EFL students develop well-written and organized essays in various genres is explained in detail in Chapter 8.

* 1. Essay Writing

The essay is a type of writing that discusses one topic or issue in several related paragraphs (Oshima & Hogue, 2007; Zemach & Rumisek, 2005; Langan, 2010). Essays are pieces of writing designed to support a thesis (Connelly, 2013). There are different definitions for essays. For example, *The* *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines the essay as “a literary composition (usually prose and short) on any subject”. Properly speaking, it is a written composition giving expression to one’s own personal ideas or opinions on some topic, but the term usually covers any written composition, where it expresses personal opinions, gives information on any given subject, or details of a narrative or description with careful choice of vocabulary and using complex grammatical devices. Nyasimi (2014) defines the essay as “…a text or a piece of writing that students creatively compose, either independently, in a group or with the help of a teacher, in response to a writing exercise or task” (p. 17).

Different authors agree that there are three components of essays: an introductory paragraph, body paragraphs, and a thesis statement (Oshima & Hogue, 2007; Zemach & Rumisek, 2005; Langan, 2010). The introductory paragraph introduces the topic or issue as a set of general statements and presents a thesis. The general statements include background information about the topic. They are usually arranged starting with more general statements followed by more specific ones. The thesis statement introduces the main ideas of the essay, where the writer includes his position. Each body paragraph has a topic sentence, supporting details, and a conclusion.

Since the focus of this book is on the five-paragraph essay, which has three main components: introduction, body and conclusion, Nyasimi’s (2014) definition is the most relevant. The introduction is usually the first paragraph of the essay, telling the reader what to expect in the following paragraphs and leading them from general information to specific details.

1. Three Main Components of the Essay

Students need help in conceptualizing their ideas to write essays in an organized format (Al-Mansour, 2015; McCune, 2004). Essay organization includes an internal division of the essay into an introduction, body, and conclusion (Al-Mansour, 2015). While the introduction introduces the topic, the body explains it and the conclusion wraps it up. Research results show that L1 Arabic students have the most difficulty in organizing their ideas in the introductions to their expository essays (Bacha, 2018; Bacha, 2002; Mukattash, 2003).

The introduction and each body paragraph start with topic sentences; however, in the introduction, the topic sentence is a hook that stimulates the reader’s interest and tells them about the topic (Zemach & Stafford-Yilmaz (2008). It could be a personal experience or idea, a quotation, a question, or surprising information. The last sentence of the introduction is generally the thesis statement, which is the most important sentence in an introduction. The thesis statement lays out the specific topic of the essay that will be developed and discussed in the paragraphs of the essay to follow (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). Zemach & Stafford-Yilmaz (2008, p. 21) suggest that “a strong thesis statement both names the topic and reveals the writer’s opinion about the topic”. They continue to prescribe that “it should be clear and specific” but specify that it “can also list the supporting ideas, but sometimes these are written in a separate sentence” (Zemach & Stafford-Yilmaz, 2008: p. 21).

The introduction should be organized to express the topic, provide some background information and capture the attention of the reader (Abdulqader, 2020). According to Svobodova et al. (2000), writers are expected to present the topic in general first. Then, they narrow the focus and make a clear thesis statement, which should express the main idea. All supporting ideas that follow should depend on the thesis statement. Therefore, it should be clear, concise and well-stated.

The body is the main part of the paper, which includes detailed information and illustrations. Each paragraph of the main body should discuss one idea of the thesis. Winterowd and Patricia (1985 as cited in Abdulqader, 2020, p. 43) describe the purpose of the essay body in the following terms

The purpose of the body is to develop the topic stated in the introduction by presenting information and illustrations about it. The body paragraphs should follow a logical organization, should include a sufficient number of illustrations, and should be unified.

Each body paragraph has a clear topic sentence related to the main idea, presents new information about it, and includes sufficient illustrations of the points.

Similarly to single paragraphs, essays have unity and coherence, where cohesive devices or transition signals link the paragraphs together (Wren, 2005). Bell (1995 as cited in Abdulqader, 2020, p. 43) describes the difficulty of providing a concluding paragraph by the following words.

It is often very hard to construct a concluding paragraph for your essay. After all, at this point you have probably said everything you want to say. Your main aim should be to keep the reader interested to the end. If in doubt, keep the conclusion brief. While it can be a good idea to suggest a new approach to the question, this shouldn’t seem as though it’s a whole argument you forgot to put in earlier.

Svobodova et al. (2000) add that the summary of the main points should be written in a different way to give the reader a different perspective on them. They also say that the conclusion could be a restatement of the introduction or an extension of the thesis statement that is logically presented in the body. It also could be a proposed solution to the problem that has been discussed earlier, a compromise between two conflicting points of view or suggestions for further investigations in the issue. Like the concluding sentence in a paragraph, the concluding paragraph in an essay wraps it up by summarizing the main points in the body paragraphs or reviewing them.

Moreover, the quality of students’ writing correlates with topic specific background knowledge, writing experiences (El-Mortaji, 2001; Scordaras, 2003), and L2 proficiency (Edelsky, 1982). If they have background knowledge about the topic, the quality of their writing will be high. Prior knowledge and writing experience are more likely to affect the revisions processes more than other factors. In this regard, some research studies show that Arab students lack this kind of knowledge, affecting the quality of their writing.

Essay writing poses another difficulty to ESL/EFL students worldwide, and EFL Arab students are not an exception. Producing coherent, cohesive, well-organized texts in English is a challenging task for EFL/ESL students due to differences in the structure, organization, vocabulary, and grammar between their native languages and English (Leki, 1991). As mentioned in Chapter 4, research results in Dutch, French, Arabic, and Chinese show that L2 learners use L1 writing strategies when writing various genres in L2 to various degrees. Usually, less proficient students depend more on their L1 and find it difficult to generate ideas. Regarding content knowledge, the extent of EFL students’ familiarity with the topic affects their ability to generate ideas. However, if they are familiar with the proposed topic, they are more likely to generate ideas about it (Stapa & Abdul Majid, 2006).

Research studies in different countries indicate the problems faced by ESL/EFL learners in writing essays in English. For example, Bennui (2008) analyzed the L1 interference of 28 third-year English-minor Thai students’ paragraphs in the final exam in English at three levels (words, sentences, and discourse) employing contrastive analysis, error analysis, interlanguage analysis, and contrastive rhetoric. Data analysis showed that the Thai students in the study would start their essays by stating a rhetorical question and answering it. However, the writer’s point does not become clear until the end of the essay. Moreover, they may express points in the concluding paragraph, which were not discussed in the introductory paragraph. A lack of coherence in the three pattern essay, introduction, body, and conclusion was evidenced.

Another study was conducted by Fareed et al. (2016) to examine the problems of essay writing of EFL undergraduate Pakistani students, focusing on the factors that affect their writing. In addition to linguistic problems, the students’ essays lacked ideas and paragraph organization and had were poorly organized. Ariyanti and Fitriana (2017) reported similar results of poor quality essays that lacked ideas and organization in Indonesian EFL university students’ essays.

Problems facing Arab college students composing essays in English have been examined by various scholars in different Arab countries indicating similar problems to paragraph and paragraphing discussed in Chapter 4 (Abdulqader, 2020; Bacha, 2018; Haddad, 2023; Hammad, 2013). Their essays include long introductions that refer to irrelevant past historical events and content that is not necessarily related to the topic. The sentences are very lengthy and set off by commas. They also transfer features of Arabic rhetoric, like repetition, parallelism, and lack of variation, that are features of Arabic prose. In contrast, the introductory paragraph of the essay in English tends to start with a hook that captures the reader’s attention that is followed by some background information. It ends with a thesis statement that explicitly indicates the main ideas of the entire essay and is usually placed at the end of the paragraph. Although some students start their paragraphs with a general statement, they are not aware of the part to be developed in supporting details (Farih, 2014). Moreover, while English discourse is linear, Arabic is circular (Ahmed, 2016).

Based on Bacha’s (2018) observations, Lebanese university students usually tend to start their essays with long introductions. Their paragraphs are long “and normally begin by giving a history that may extend from the ‘beginning of time’ or some remarks that are often not relevant to the topic” (p. 17). They are neither coherent nor well-developed. In addition, these students usually do not adequately indicate the main idea or the purpose of the essay; instead of writing directly, they usually write around the topic, including repetition of phrases before the main statement is pronounced (Alsamadani, 2010). In addition, they do not wrap up conclusions restating the main ideas. They also start a new topic in the conclusion. Other researchers and scholars indicated that, claiming that L1 Arabic negative transfer on L2 English texts (Bacha, 2002; Fareh, 2014; Mukattash, 2003; Sa’adeddin, 1989).

Results of several research studies show that Arab students transfer the features of cohesion in Arabic into their essays in English, which results in the misuse of certain cohesive ties and textual deviation (Qaddumi, 1995). While Arabic features of cohesion are described as context-based, generalized, repetition-oriented, and additive, English cohesion is characterized as text-based, specified, change-oriented, and non-additive (Ahmed, 2010). Some scholars like Hinkel (2004) and Olga (2012) argue that a cohesive text may not necessarily be coherent, whereas a coherent text may not contain any cohesive device. A text could be coherent when all its parts are connected, and the reader can make meaning of it based on his/her background knowledge.

Ahmed (2010) conducted a study at Helwan Faculty of Education, Egypt, administering a questionnaire to one hundred students majoring in English and their teachers. Results reveal that cohesion and coherence constitute a problem for students. In addition, they face difficulty choosing essay topics due to their lack of prior topic knowledge. Regarding cohesion, some mentioned difficulties using cataphoric and anaphoric reference, ellipsis, substitution, and genre-related cohesive devices. Similar difficulties in paragraph development were discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Modhish (2012) investigated the use of DS in essays written by 50 Yemeni students. Like other research results, elaborative DS followed by inferential, contrastive, causative, and topic-relating markers were used. Findings also show a positive correlation between the number of DS in the essay and the quality of the written texts only when topic relating markers were used. The use of DS does not reflect cohesive texts. Elaborative markers such as *and* are commonly used in spoken as well as written Arabic, which indicates relying on Arabic DS for producing essays.

Several research studies were conducted to identify problems facing Arab learners in writing essays in English. Fareh (2014), who analyzed five hundred essays of Arab students, found that they lack coherence, cohesion, and logical relations between sentences and exhibit poor paragraph development. Ibnian (2017) analyzed 82 Jordanian EFL students’ essays and questionnaires and discovered that a lack of ideas appears as the main difficulty. Similarly, the findings of Aldera’s (2016) analysis show a lack of logical thought, organization, inter-sentence relations, and cohesive devices in the writing of advanced female learners in the Master’s degree program in the Department of English at Najran University, Saudi Arabia. An example of her findings follows:

A Good Citizen

The qualities that people should have in order to be considered good

citizens are really ambiguous to some extent. There have been many

controversies regarding this topic. It’s a kind of privilege for the society to have good citizens.

Analyzing the introduction shows that the topic sentence does not focus on the topic (citizen) and the attitude expressed in the title (good). In addition, the body of the introduction lacks development, and the concluding sentence is not satisfying, which negatively affects the development of the composition. The second example includes neither a topic sentence nor a concluding sentence. The introductory paragraph lacks content. In the third example, the student drifts away from the idea of the topic sentence, contrasting characteristics of citizens in the past and present. It also lacks logical development and organization of thought.

It could be concluded that all the introductory paragraphs of the sample compositions lack the basic structure of essays in English. The topic sentences are either inappropriate or lacking. The main ideas are not developed satisfactorily. In addition, the sentences lack cohesion. The body paragraphs of the compositions are not that different. They lack logical development and organizational patterns since there is no connection with the information provided by the introductory paragraphs. The students either started with one idea or drifted away into other discussions.

Haddad (2023) conducted a study exploring the features of Arabic rhetoric in essays written by advanced university-level Algerian EFL students employing qualitative and quantitative methods. The researcher used a contrastive rhetoric analysis for analyzing a similar writing task given to 70 students in two groups: 35 majoring in EFL and the other 35 in Arabic. In addition, the researcher interviewed three teachers of written expression in the English Department and a group of content-subject teachers in the Department of English. The results of contrastive rhetoric analysis showed that the EFL students’ essays in English are far below the conventional standard of essays in English and demonstrate many rhetorical features of Arabic. Analysis of the essays shows that the participants adopted two different internal structures of essays in the two samples, mainly in using introductions and conclusions. However, the number of their paragraphs was almost identical. For example, the students majoring in Arabic included more than one concluding paragraph (with a mean of 1.34) compared to English students (with a mean of 1.02). While not all essays in both included concluding paragraphs, students majoring in English did much better. While 65.68% of the EFL participants used a concluding paragraph, and only 17.14% of the other group did so.

Regarding thesis statements, results show that just over half of the essays in each group included a thesis statement: 71.42% of essays in English and 54.28% in Arabic. Similarly, while 28.57% of the former group did not include a thesis statement, 54.71 of the latter did not. The latter group of subjects did not explicitly or implicitly imply the thesis sentence that would help the reader ascertain the writer’s attitude or opinion from the essay. However, these differences are not statistically significant. The latter group did not provide a clear and well-focused thesis statement, added some questions to their introductory paragraphs, and answered each question in an independent paragraph, introducing some sections with headings and insufficient links between them.

Similarly, students face difficulties in using thesis statements correctly. Both groups encountered this problem in a very similar proportion: 68% of English students and 78.94% of Arabic students. This means their essays discussed their announced topics within the included thesis statements. However, 64.70% of the EFL group and 60% of the Arabic group who used thesis statements announced the topic, but none had a controlling idea. Six essays (35.29%) and four Arabic students (26.66%) included focused thesis statements with a noticeable controlling idea about the topic. Only two (13.33%) of the Arabic group expressed their purpose behind writing the essay in the thesis statements. However, they did so in general terms.

An incorrect thesis statements is a mismatch between the statement and the content of the essay. This means the essay does not discuss the suggested topic or the main idea. The results of this category show that 32% of the English students’ essay statements and 21.05% of the Arabic students’ statements did not match the rest of the essay. In conclusion, almost half of the participants in both groups either did not include a thesis statement at all (28.57% for the English students and 45.71% for the Arabic students) or had an incorrect one that did not match the content of the essays (22.85% for the English students and 11.42% for the Arabic students). The other half, 48.57% of the EFL group and 42.85% of the Arabic language group who seemingly used a correct thesis statement did not do this effectively. Most of them just announced the topic without including any position or attitude. In addition, those who included thesis statements with a clear focus did not control the content of the essay because they provided general information about the topic and did not adhere to the expressed thesis statement. Only four participants controlled the content of the essays successfully: three EFL students and one Arabic language student. In conclusion, text analysis showed that learners’ samples lacked logical thought and organization. Besides the lack of essential syntax rules, their compositions lacked inter-sentence relations and cohesive devices.

The literature reviewed here indicates difficulties faced by Arab EFL students when writing essays in English, many of which stem from first language interference. Besides sentence-level problems in terms of grammar and vocabulary, discussed in Chapter 4, Arab EFL learners struggle to produce logically developed, well-organized essays in different genres, using interrelated sentences and cohesive devices. They are neither familiar with topics for writing nor with content knowledge. As a result, generating ideas poses another challenge for them.

* 1. Analysis of my Students’ Introductory Paragraphs

The following samples of my students’ introductions are taken from their assignments in the Academic Writing Course III from different years.

Bedouin girls should attend colleges

Many Bedouin girls suffer in their lives because of the socio-economic background. Thus, many of them get married after they finish high school, and sometimes even before. But nowadays, Arabs say “education is a woman’s weapon” which means a woman needs education to improve her life. So, studying at a college has many advantages that help every Bedouin girl to have a better future career in terms of accessibility, right education and to get socially engaged easily.

Looking at this introductory paragraph indicates that the topic sentence matches neither the title nor the rest of the paragraph. While the title is about the need for Bedouin girls to attend colleges of higher education, the topic sentence discusses a new topic. It also lacks logical development and organization. The idea shift is obvious in this paragraph. The writer shifts from one idea to another. In addition, the use of DS is inappropriate, using the conjunctions *but* and *so* instead of DS *however* and *therefore*. The writer included a thesis statement, but it lacks clarity and connection with the previous sentences. The writer did not show how education would improve the lives of Bedouin women. In addition, the concepts of “accessibility,” “right education,” and “get socially engaged easily” are neither related to the previous sentence nor clear to the reader.

Why is traveling important?

Nowadays, people have fears with travelling to other countries. First of all, they might be afraid of wasting their money on traveling because traveling to somewhere else requires money due to the plane tickets, hotels and other activities. Second of all, many people have fear of flying which means that they have anxiety caused by flying because of the highest of the plane from the land. Furthermore, people usually meet people from their same culture they don’t exposed to another cultures because they could be afraid of that they won’t know how to speak or in which way to speak to strangers. However, it is essential that people travel from time to time because travelling important for humans in terms of self-exploring, creating new relations and relieving stress.

The topic sentences in this introductory paragraph do not match the title. While the title is about the importance of travelling abroad, the topic sentence discusses a new topic: fears travelers have when they travel. There is no logical development of ideas leading to the thesis statement that suddenly states the importance of travelling. The use of DS is acceptable except for *however*, which appears at the beginning of the thesis statement. There is no need to include DS in the thesis statement.

Exams

Exams should be banned. The exam is a general method to evaluate students’ grades. However, it doesn’t represent the ability of the pupils very well. Therefore, the administration of the school should replace the exam. Among these reasons are mental, psychological, and physical effects.

In this sample, relevant information does not follow the topic sentence. There is a shift from banning exams to defining them. In addition, there is no explanation for why exams do not reflect students’ abilities and performance. Immediately, the fourth sentence includes a partial solution, replacing exams without offering other options for evaluating pupils. The thesis statement is unclear and includes two concepts, reasons and effects. This introductory paragraph is brief and lacks logical organization. However, the use of DS is appropriate.

Is the Coronavirus Dangerous?

Coronavirus is a virus that causes illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases. Coronavirus disease or (COVID-19) is a new strain that was discovered in 2019 and has not been previously identified to humans. At the moment, it has spread to almost 70 locations internationally. This virus is very dangerous since it is evolving incredibly fast, it is much more severe than an ordinary flu and older people are at a great risk of dying from it.

This sample is similar to the other samples in many ways. First, the topic sentence does not reflect the title accurately. It could be a good background information sentence that follows the topic sentence. The danger of coronavirus suddenly appears in the thesis statement. Only an explanation of the fast-spreading nature of the virus precedes the thesis statement. It also lacks syntactic parallelism, including two sentences together. The use of *at the moment* is inappropriate too. *Now* is more appropriate here. In addition, *evolving* is a wrong word choice in this context, which should be replaced by *spreading*.

1. Genres of Essays

There are different genres of essays, such as expository essays, descriptive essays, comparison essays, persuasive essays, cause/effect essays, comparison-contrast essays, and problem-solution essays. However, this chapter focuses on explanatory, problem-solution, comparison-contrast, and persuasive essays.

* 1. Expository Essays

An expository or explanatory essay intends to give readers information by presenting all relevant information without favoring any particular view and focusing on objective information, such as facts, for explaining a particular topic, process, or set of ideas. It aims to help students build knowledge and understanding (Abdulqader, 2020). Therefore, it should include details related to the topic only to develop the main idea to avoid a lack of focus. Although expository writing aims to inform and explain, including personal experiences is acceptable to avoid lifeless and dull essays (Abdulqader, 2020).

Hammad (2013) conducted a study to examine problems faced by Palestinian EFL university students in essay writing, employing researcher-made instruments: an EFL essay-writing test, an open-question questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews. The first two instruments were given to 60 EFL students at Al-Aqsa University in Gaza, and the third instrument, an open questionnaire, was answered by three English writing instructors. Data analysis shows that students face different problems writing essays in English. Besides problems using the right grammatical patterns and vocabulary, their essays lacked content, logical order and sequence of ideas (cohesion and coherence), essay organization, academic style, and proofreading. In addition, they were wanting in terms of academic style, content, and proofreading. However, students got high scores in the content category, attributed to their familiarity with the required topic: personal hobbies.

Bacha (2018) conducted a research study employing a mixed method of qualitative analysis and quantitative measures to investigate possible causes of L1 Arabic students (Lebanese) expository essays in English. Besides analyzing the content in terms of organization of ideas, vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure, the researcher administered a questionnaire, asking about the same categories and their perceptions of their abilities to develop expository essays. Findings reveal a high correlation between holistic essay scores and content analysis in all aspects researched. However, results from the student questionnaire show that they highly value their abilities in writing essays, denying L1 interference, which was reflected in neither the holistic essay scores nor content analysis results. Content analysis shows that the students did not include clear thesis statements, which resulted in unorganized essays and undeveloped ideas. In addition, they did not include clear topic sentences or evidence to support their ideas. The three essential parts of an introduction, topic sentence, supporting details, and conclusion, are not cohesively connected. In addition, the sentence structure is weak, and the essay sounds like informal spoken discourse, not formal academic writing. Bacha concludes that negative transfer is reflected in their introductory sentences, which are too general and irrelevant, their conclusions that do not wrap up the essays adequately, and their thesis statements, which introduce the ideas in the body paragraphs.

The following samples were written in different stages. In the beginning, the students were required to write the introduction and the conclusion and to develop an outline. In the second draft, they were required to follow my comments, revise the content, edit their mistakes, and add a body paragraph. The third step required them to add two body paragraphs. To evaluate the students’ writing accurately, the paragraphs written in the first stage were taken from the three drafts.

Friendship

Having strong friendships is one of the most important aspects of life. Friends are like an alternative to our family members, especially when we are distant from them. Many people do their best to look for friends whatever it takes. Having friends is beneficial because friends help us cope with problems, good for our health and improve our self-confidence.

First, friends could be the best supporters for people in solving problems. Problem comes without invitation, so nobody could avoid it. In such circumstances including serious illness, divorce or loss of a job, friends could be the best supporters for people to solve problems. By expressing sympathy and giving advice, friends will help each other and bring a way out from the problems. Friends are cooperative in order to help each other throughout life problems.

Second, having friends is good for one’s health and helps him/her live longer. Friends can share each other problems and events that make them happy or sad. Therefore, having friends reduces bodily stress, which leads to reduced blood pressure and a lower heart rate. Moreover, it have been proven that friends help people live longer, possibly due to the healthy influences they have on one’s daily behaviors. Friends can help people stop smoking, eat better and these all are key components for longevity.

Finally, having friends enhances self-esteem. Sometimes the biggest deterrent to accomplish one’s goals is thinking that he/she can’t. Friends see strengths in each other, which the person himself is not able to recognize and give the encouragement to try something new or do something better. Thus, friends give each other self-confidence to go through life.

To conclude, friendship is important. Humans are social creatures, who need friends to accompany their life. Having good friends could help people overcome their troubles, have a good health and enhance their self-esteem. That is why having good friends is beneficial.

This sample of an expository essay lacks essential relevant information. Specific examples are not included. The introductory paragraph has a topic sentence and thesis statement but lacks focus. Immediately, it shifts to explain the value of having strong friendships, not the concept of friendship. The following two sentences introduce other ideas. In addition, the topic sentence does not define the concept of friendship. The introductory paragraph includes many ideas that are not well-developed and connected, which could lead directly to the thesis statement. The thesis statement is good, but it lacks parallelism. While the first and the third phrases are verbal, the second is noun phrases. The essay includes DS that indicates sequential order like *first*, *second*, and *finally* and frame markers like *to conclude*. However, not all DS indicates the correct relationship between the ideas. For example, in the second body paragraph, the relationship between the second and the third sentences. The reason for third sentence starting with the discourse marker *therefore* is unclear. The writer should have added more information to clarify the meaning and causes that led to this marker’s use. The essay also includes grammatical and lexical mistakes. Besides the mistake of parallelism, the use of *have* with the pronoun *it* is incorrect. It should be *it has*. Using the word *cooperative* to explain the support friends provide is inappropriate. The word *supportive* is more appropriate in this context.

Online courses

There are many advantages for taking online courses. The first advantage is lower total costs. Online courses can be more affordable than other colleges. For example, there are no commuting costs.

The second advantage is online courses are more comfortable learning. There are no physical class sessions, lectures and other materials are electronically sent to the students. Students will not fight traffic, find parking spaces.

The third advantage is flexibility. Online courses give students the opportunity to plan their study time around the rest of their day, instead of the other way around. Students can study and work when they are at their peak energy.

At the end, I think online courses are much easier for students, and I highly recommend this way of learning

While the students were required to write this essay in three drafts, this student submitted it at once. The introductory paragraph lacks a thesis statement and sounds like any other body paragraph. It discusses affordability as one of the advantages of online courses. The ideas also lack explanation and elaboration. For example, the writer did not explain the idea of being at “peak energy”. The conclusion does not summarize the points and introduces a new topic. The essay includes signals to express advantages but fails to use DMs that show the relationships between ideas. In addition, the essay includes some linguistic mistakes.

* 1. Problem-solution essays

Lapham (2023) defines a problem-solution essay as discussing a problem and providing possible solutions. It usually requires writers to do some research before they start the process of writing. The primary thrust of a problem-solution essay is usually either an argument for a specific solution to a problem or a strong case for the urgent need to solve a problem. Zemach and Stafford-Yilmaz (2008) add that the thesis statement in problem-solution essays usually proposes a solution without giving details, leading naturally to the body of the essay. While the introduction introduces the problem, the problem paragraphs explain it clearly, emphasizing that it is not a personal issue but a problem that may affect the public (Nordquist, 1995). Therefore, writers should avoid using personal pronouns like *I* and *you*. In the solution paragraphs, the writer offers a concrete solution to the problem, explaining its advantage compared to other solutions. If the solution requires taking a series of steps, the writer should present them logically. The conclusion stresses the importance of the problem and the offered solution(s).

There are two types of structures for problem-solution essays (Zemach & Stafford-Yilmaz, 2008). The first type presents the problem in the introductory paragraph, and each body paragraph provides another way to solve the problem. In contrast, after presenting the problem, the first body paragraph describes the solution and how it works. The other body paragraphs provide more information about the possible solutions. For example, one may give reasons for proposing this specific solution; another may include the advantages of such a solution, and the third may compare it to a more common solution.

Smartphone Addiction

Today, smartphones are the main focus in many people’s lives; slowly, smartphones have become the obsession of young people, which has become gradually normal among older people too; As a result, socializing, which is human’s most important activity, is less practiced! However, the problem can still be reduced by limiting time of using technological devices, limiting the places and finding other sources for various activities.

Limiting time is a very important step to decrease the use of smartphones. First, people have to limit their time of using smartphones during the day; most people today use their phones at any time they want without paying attention to the time or situation, so, this step requires people to have enough motivation to convince themselves of which is the right time to turn their phones on.

When people have that motivation, they can now set for themselves the right times they can use their phones; deciding the time a person can use his phone is not that difficult. Also, it depends on the person’s behavior and personality; for example, when Y is talking to X, X should be aware enough to know that this is not the right time to use his phone.

In addition, people have to know that using their phones at night is unhealthy for their eyes and it disturbs sleep; in most cases today, people lose track of time while surfing online on their phone, which often leads to less sleep and also, damaging their eyesight without being aware of it.

Second, designating special places for smartphones use is the second step to decrease the use of smartphones. Parents as well as students should know that using a smartphone at school will most likely affect them negatively, they may end up having bad grades, addition to make the student less socializing less with his classmates, so parents should help their kids to understand the negativity of using their phones at school.

Other than school, people should limit their use of phones at gatherings; today, people can be considered rude by simply using their phones, for example. If X is using his phone all the time while he’s in a family gathering, other family members may think that he’s not interested enough in spending time with them; so the person should pay more attention to the people around him rather than his phone.

The last and most important step is finding other sources for the different activities. people use their smartphones for different activities while these same activities can be done via other sources, rather than using the phone to look for information, people can find information in different books and encyclopedia; this is one of the ways to decrease the use of smartphones.

People can also find other sources to play games, instead of downloading apps on their phones and using them for hours, they can play video games on their consoles either at home or game centers.

And the most important use that can be decreased is talking to other people via the phone, most people nowadays talk to their friends on their phones more than real life, to decrease such a problem which is the main effect on socializing, people should hang out more and spend time together more.

In conclusion, there are several ways to solve the smartphones addiction problem which is spreading among people and has become more severe; people should start to take action before smartphones’ addiction becomes the normal way of living.

Following the instructions for writing this assignment, the essay should include five paragraphs: an introduction, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion. However, this essay includes seven paragraphs, splitting the body paragraphs to discuss each point separately. The presentation of the problem in the topic sentence is inadequate. It is not clear why smartphones could be a problem today. In addition, the link between the first and third sentences is unclear. It does not show how smartphones lead to less socializing. The use of the DMs *as a result* and *however* is inappropriate. Although the thesis statement is linguistically parallel, semantically, it is not completely clear, especially the second point. The idea of limiting places is vague. In addition, the use of the word *sources* in the third point is wrong. The right word choice in this context would be *types*.

The first body paragraph discusses the first possible solution. However, it includes redundancy. It repeats the ideas mentioned in the introductory paragraph. Similarly, the effect of motivation is repeated in the first body paragraph without indicating its purpose and effect. Mentioning using smartphones at night and at gatherings obstructs the flow of ideas. The last solution does not fit with the explanation in the last body paragraph. Reading the third solution offered in the introduction gives the reader to understand offering other activities to occupy users of smartphones. However, the third body paragraph discusses using other sources, such as books and encyclopedias to find information. The lack of ideas and organization is clear in this essay. The use of DMs is fairly good, although some are inappropriate, including the conjunction *and* at the beginning of the sentence. Like other essay examples, it includes many language mistakes. In addition, the writer ignores the need for indenting five spaces at the beginning of each paragraph.

Bullying

In our schools, bullying is one of the major problems that students face almost day. It adversely affects students’ learning because they will feel disconnected from school, which causes to a lot of school absences, and loss of motivation for learning. Also, bullying has a big impact on schools’ climate. For example, it develops an environment of fear and disrespect and makes students feel insecure and hate school. Thus, to prevent and reduce this widespread phenomenon, there is a need to take these solutions into considerations.

Teachers should create a comfortable classroom environment. For example, at least one of the teachers should dedicate ten minutes of his lesson to make a small activity, such as small discussion with the students or showing them a short video about kindness and empathy. Hence, students will understand the importance of being kind to others, and it decreases the bullying cases at the schools. Also, making one lesson per week that requires the students to work in groups, which makes them have the chance to communicate and to know more about each other. As a result, the students will create new friendships with others and creates a classroom atmosphere full of love and respect. However, the most important feature that prevents bullying is that teachers should treat pupils with kindness and empathy.

Parents should help their child to avoid bullying. When parents feel that their child revealed to bullying, they, immediately, should head and talk to the school principal about the situation, because some research studies show that school administrators, such as principals, can play an essential role in bullying prevention. Also, parents should encourage their children to get involved in school activities. While encouraging the children to take part in activities, interests, and hobbies they like, it will give them a chance to have fun and meet others with the same interests.

Therefore, they can build confidence and friendships that protect them from bullying. Moreover, each parent has the chance to prevent bullying from the root by having small conversations with their kids about how to treat others. For example, teaching their children that treating others with kindness makes them great persons in everyone’s eyes and brings people closer to you.

Unfortunately, according to several research studies, 64% of students who are bullied do not report it. Thus, victims should have enough awareness and strength to deal with the physical and verbal bullying in schools. For example, pupils who experienced or witness bullying cases should not feel frightened and keep silent, though they should report this unacceptable phenomenon to their parents and teachers. In addition, students who are exposed to bullying must not stay alone. For instance, they can go to the bathroom with a friend, or they could have lunch in a group.

Students who still face bullying will suffer, be insecure and have permanent anxiety feelings. As a result of that and according to UCLA Case Study, they will suffer from headaches, stomach pains, and trouble sleeping besides the drop in their educational level. If there was nobody to deal with this phenomenon, the situation of the students will worsen, which might lead them to commit suicide. Therefore, both parents and teachers should stop bullying by spreading kindness and educating the students that bullying is not an acceptable behavior.

The topic sentence presents the problem, gives background information, and discusses the consequences. However, the thesis statement sounds like a general statement. The possible solutions are not mentioned despite using the demonstrative reference *these*. The use of the DM is good. However, placing the DM *thus* as the initial word in a thesis statement is inappropriate. The first and the second body paragraphs include solutions. However, the third paragraph again discusses bullying and its consequences on pupils. The student is adopting a zig-zag writing style. In addition, the topic sentence in this paragraph is inappropriate. It includes specific information and a percentage of students who experience bullying and do not report it. The concluding paragraph summarizes the problems, their consequences, and the possible solutions. However, there is no clear relationship between physical consequences and psychological solutions. In addition, the essay includes many linguistic mistakes and lacks consistency in terms of paragraph indentation.

* 1. Comparison-Contrast Essays

A compare and contrast essay examines two or more topics, objects, people, or ideas, indicating their similarities and differences (Oshima & Hogue, 2007; Zemach & Stafford-Yilmaz, 2008). In addition, the body paragraphs are organized in two ways: subject-by-subject or point-by-point (Connelly, 2013). In the subject-by-subject organization, the body paragraphs are divided into two sections: the first introduces the topics and controlling ideas of the first subject, followed by the second. In the second type of organization, point-by-point, the essay includes a series of comparisons and contrasts that show certain similarities and differences.

Using a mixed data collection method, Toba et al. (2019) investigated problems facing Indonesian EFL students in their comparison and contrast essays. These instruments are an essay-writing test, an open-ended questionnaire, and an interview. Their findings showed that these students encounter problems in content and organization in addition to semantics, syntactic, and mechanical errors.

Traveling alone or with other people

All travelers need to make the decision of traveling alone or with other people. In fact, there’s a big difference between traveling alone without a partnership, and traveling with people such as your family, cousins, or friends. When traveling alone instead of traveling with a tour group you can meet more strange people, be self-reliant, and have more chances to recognize unfamiliar places.

Firstly, one of the major distinctions between traveling alone and traveling with a tour group is meeting people you haven’t met before. Thus, being a solo traveler makes it much easier to interact with the local people and make some new friendships. Furthermore, the locals are much more interested in what someone traveling on his or her own is doing in their country and are more likely to help him/her out. Consequently, a solo traveler may recognize and mix with people he/she haven’t met them before.

Even more importantly is that you, as a solo traveler, can go and discover exciting places around the world. Therefore, it can lead you to have a more enjoyable and brave experience. In addition, your reflections on the trip will make you realize all the things which you learned there, the friendships you made, the difficulties you faced, and the challenges you overcame. The whole experience can be more amazing because you can focus on the things that excite you and visit places that interest you.

The most important advantage of travelling alone is having more chances to recognize new unfamiliar places. When you travel alone, you get the opportunity to plan your own route and the places you want to visit. When you travel with other people, often you have to compromise going to some places so that everyone is happy about it. Traveling on your own means that you get to choose the extra activities you want to do and plan your trip in a way that benefits you without following a particular plan that may not be suitable for you.

By the way of conclusion, traveling alone or traveling in group is quite different in terms of meeting unfamiliar people, being more responsible, and visiting places by your own choice. But we cannot deny the fact that traveling with a group has its advantages, and that many people prefer to travel with a group. It is totally based on the particular interests of each traveler to take into account what kinds of travelling are entirely appropriate for them.

This comparison-contrast essay does not follow the typical structure of the comparative essay. It neither introduces the topics and controlling ideas of the first subject followed by the second subject nor employs the point-by-point method comparing and contrasting similarities and differences. In other words, this essay neither compares nor contrasts—the focus is on traveling alone.

The content lacks elaboration. It lacks examples, facts, quotes, and other kinds of evidence to show the differences between the types of traveling to reach a conclusion. For example, the content of the body paragraph does not include any information about the advantages of traveling with others. In the first part of the concluding sentence, the writer summarized the advantages of traveling alone and moved to the advantages of traveling with a group, which are not mentioned in the essay.

The other writing problems in the introductory paragraph are similar to those discussed above. The topic sentence does not fully fit with the topic. Instead of directly writing about the experience, the writer shifted the direction to making decisions about traveling alone or with a group and overgeneralized using *all* to express group-oriented thinking patterns, transferring the Arabic cultural thought patterns. In addition, the paragraph does not include enough information to lead to the thesis statement.

The first body paragraph lacks a topic sentence. The second body paragraph does not have a topic sentence, but it has a concluding one. It includes general ideas about challenges and friendships, which was the focus of the first body paragraph and is not in line with the focus of the paragraph, which is discovering places. The writer started including new things without further information about the exciting places the traveler would visit. In terms of organization, the use of DS shows that the student is aware and able to use them partially. For example, the concluding sentence starts with the inappropriate discourse marker, *consequently*. In addition, using *By the way of conclusion* at the beginning of the concluding paragraph is strange. The use of the coordinator *but* is not acceptable. Moreover, the word *advantages* associated with traveling with others appears for the first time in the conclusion. Furthermore, using *entirely*, *totally*, and *more likely* does not fit with the characteristics of compare-contrast essays DS. Sometimes, the writer uses hedging and boosting to express hesitance and certainty. The essay does not include DS that express comparison and contrast like *however* and *in contrast*.

There is no consistent indention of five spaces at the beginning of each paragraph. It also includes semantic problems such as describing an experience using the wrong right choice, *brave*. The use of the personal reference *you* reduces the objectivity of the discussion of living near the city center or in the suburbs.

Living in the city center or in the suburb

Choosing whether to live near the city center or in the suburbs is a major decision that many people face in life. They may feel tempted to move closer to work to save time or to the peace of the suburbs to start a family.

These days, people face so many types of pressures in their lives. Whether financial pressures, social pressures or psychological pressures. Therefore, they absolutely need a quiet and peaceful environment to relax at least when they are at home. Living in the suburbs enable people to have more privacy, more safety and a quite environment.

The suburbs can offer people more privacy compared to city living. There are less people and wider open spaces in the suburbs, which may provide more privacy for residents and less congestion. Moreover, in the suburbs, homes may include a lawn and a private yard. Kids and pets have the space to roam and enjoy the controlled bit of great outdoors.

Typically, suburban areas have lower crime rates than cities. Cities are safer today than they have been in decades, but most still have higher crime rates than the surrounding suburbs. It is also more common to see gated communities in the suburbs. For many people, safety is a top concern, particularly for those that have children and family.

For many citizens, light and noise pollution diminishes their quality of life. Noisy environments can lead to stress, increased blood pressure and sleep disturbances. In addition, light pollution contributes to sleep disturbances. A suburban home offers respite from the horns, sirens and city lights.

As cities continue to grow, the suburbs are no longer what they used to be in the past. Families nowadays are reaping the benefits of suburban living. In an age where life became full of stress and struggles, the suburbs can be the best choice for a greater quality of life and a much happier environment when compared to the stresses and pressures of city living.

Similar to the analysis of the first essay, the paragraph structure does not match the comparison-contrast essay structure. The focus is on one subject, living in the suburb. In the two first topic sentences, the writer clearly discussed ideas about living in the suburb. In contrast, the third body paragraph includes information about noise pollution and its effects. The writer does not make it clear that living in the city center may cause people to suffer from the effects of noise pollution. No DS are used to show the comparison and contrast relations in the paragraphs.

The introductory paragraph has a topic sentence, supporting details, and a thesis statement. However, there is no logical connection between the topic sentence and the content of the sentences. Apart from the second sentence, which provides some background information, none of the sentences that follow is relevant to the topic or the topic sentence. There is a shift of ideas. The sentences discuss a new idea: the pressures people face that would lead them to live in the suburbs without mentioning the contrasting idea.

* 1. Persuasive Essays

A persuasive essay is an essay that attempts to convince readers of a particular point of view and to change their minds regarding it (Intaraprawat, 2002). It could be in the form of academic writing or personal writing. Persuasive essays begin with a question to which the writer provides answers throughout the essay, providing evidence either in favor of or against the proposition. A personal essay writer makes a statement and supports it with data, research, and anecdotal experience. To convince readers, the writer provides supporting evidence and counter-arguments (Zemach & Stafford-Yilmaz (2008). According to Maccoun (1983, as cited in Hatch, 1992), the structure of argumentative essays includes different patterns. The first pattern starts with an introduction, reason, refutation, and conclusion. It could be a zig-zag solution, adopting either pro-con or con-pro. The second pattern starts with a counter-argument that might be the reader’s position, followed by the writer’s claims and support. The third pattern includes one argument without providing opposing ideas. It means that it does not include any refutation. The fourth type combines various viewpoints, with the writer arguing in favor of the ones to which they subscribe.

Writing a persuasive essay aims to convince the reader to believe in something, to change his/her mind about something, or to take action. Writers present their topics and support them with reasons and examples. Writing persuasive essays requires writers to develop critical thinking skills, enabling them to evaluate the reasons to be provided and choose the most effective ones (Abdulqader, 2020). Other scholars refer to persuasive essays as argumentative ones, organized around a clear thesis, which discusses a controversial topic or issue, aiming to persuade readers to accept or agree with the writer’s point of view (Intraraprawat, 2002). According to Crusius and Channell (2000, as cited in Saito, 2010), writing a persuasive or argumentative essay requires writers to make a claim (thesis) and to support it with evidence and reasons, providing logical arguments and refuting possible counter-arguments. These essays use the simple present tense since they discuss the facts.

Different studies like Rahimi (2011) in Iran and Liu and Braine (2005) in China were conducted to examine the use of discourse devices in persuasive/argumentative essays. Rahimi’s study (2011) examined the frequency and kind of DS employed by Iranian EFL learners in argumentative and expository essays and the differences between these devices in the two types of essays. Findings showed that elaborative devices like *and*, *also*, *moreover*, and *or* were the most frequent ones in both genres, with a higher frequency of *and* being encountered. In contrast, contrastive and conclusive markers were the least used, with a higher frequency in argumentative than in expository essays. The researcher concluded that the use of DS is not an indicator of quality writing by Iranian undergraduate EFL students.

Similarly, a study by Liu and Braine (2005) investigated the use of cohesive devices in argumentative essays produced by Chinese undergraduate students. Results show that these students used various lexical devices that fall into three categories: lexical, referential, and conjunctive. However, they encountered difficulty using these devices accurately and effectively. The results also demonstrated that the composition scores co-varied significantly with the total number of cohesive devices, with a high correlation with lexical devices.

The studies above showed that EFL learners still use restricted cohesive devices (mainly elaborative, referential, and contrastive devices) inappropriately and ineffectively. Other researchers have focused on metadiscourse to examine the use of device markers for composing good persuasive/argumentative essays. Metadiscourse is words or phrases that help writers organize texts, express attitudes, and provide evidence, making sure the flow of ideas, which intend to help the reader process and understand texts besides being essential elements for persuasive and argumentative discourse (Hyland, 2005; 2015). Following Halliday’s (1994) Social Functional Language (SFL) analysis, language serves three functions, ideational, interpersonal, and textual, to help language users communicate in different social contexts and for particular social purposes. Interactional DS for persuasive and argumentative essays include hedges, boosters, attitude markers, engagement markers, and self-mentions. The following table is taken from Hyland (2015), which explains the use of these markers for persuasion and argumentation.

TABLE 31 A model of metadiscourse in academic texts

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Function** | **Examples** |
| **Interactional resources involve the reader in the argument** |  |  |
| Hedges | Withhold the writer’s full commitment to the proposition | might/perhaps/possible/about |
| Boosters | Emphasize force or writer’s certainty in the proposition | in fact/definitely/it is clear that |
| Attitude markers | Express the writer’s attitude to the proposition | unfortunately/I agree/surprisingly |
| Engagement markers | Explicitly refer to or build a relationship with the reader | consider/note that/you can see that |
| Self-mentions | Explicit reference to the author(s) | I/we/my/our |

Table drawn from Hyland (2015).

Simin and Tavangar (2009) conducted a research study to look at the writing of Iranian EFL students from a pragmatic perspective, specifically examining the use of metadiscourse. The researchers analyzed the samples of essays written on argumentative topics by ninety Iranian EFL students for one semester. They were divided into three proficiency groups: upper-intermediate, intermediate, and lower-intermediate. Results show that there is a strong correlation between the level of students’ proficiency in English and their use of metadiscourse. It means the more the student is proficient, the more they use metadiscourse. In addition, it could be inferred that explicit instruction in metadiscourse markets positively affects the correct use of metadiscourse.

Abdel Kader (2019) conducted a study to investigate the type and frequency of DS (DMs) used by Saudi EFL university learners in their argumentative writing, seeking to examine the relationship between the use of DMs and writing quality. The researcher employed qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze the essays of 48 undergraduate students majoring in English at AL-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University. Data analysis showed that elaborative DMs (*and*, *above all*, *after all*, *also*) ranked first, followed by inferential (*so*, *because*, *as a result*) and contrastive markers (*so*, *because of that*, *as a result*), which were used the least. Findings also indicated that the subjects relied on certain markers of each type, overusing *and*, *because*, *so* and *but*. However, none of the topic relating markers (*in contrast*, *on the other hand*) was used in the essays. Results also revealed that the learners’ overall use of DMs had no positive correlation with the quality of their writing. However, their use of contrastive DMs correlated positively with the quality of their essays.

The students followed the pattern of the persuasive essay that starts with a counter-argument to the writer’s argument, anticipating the reader’s likely response. This pattern is mentioned by Zemach and Stafford-Yilmaz (2008). The writer presents his/her argument and supports it in the sentences that follow.

The Adoption of Children

Adoption is a great opportunity for couples who are not able to have children. There are many different reasons why people choose to adopt children. One reason is infertility. Another reason is that some people have medical problems that would make the pregnancy more difficult than usual. In addition, others do not want to pass a certain genetic problem into other generations. As a result, these couples tend to adopt children to have their own child to love and care for. However, other people think that adoption is a dangerous thing to do since the adopter brings to his life a strange person who could hurt him or take advantage of him. Nevertheless, adoption is wonderful since it gives a chance for couples who cannot conceive a biological child, gives the child a loving home and helps a same-sex couple who wants to become parents.

Adoption gives the couples who can’t have a biological child the opportunity to achieve their dream and have one. One of the most common reasons why people adopt is that they can’t have a biological child. Some couples In many cases, they have tried to have a child the natural way and struggled through months or even years of infertility treatments that have ultimately failed. Therefore, they decide to pursue adoption as a different way to become parents. However, while others believe that this is a dangerous thing to do, I believe that it is a very magnificent thing for both the couples and the child because they are achieving a dream of them and giving a child the chance of a better life.

Another reason why adoption is great is that it gives the child a loving home. Some couples choose to adopt a child whether the adoption is domestically or internationally just so they can give this child a better life condition. Furthermore, prospective adoptive parents recognize that there are many children who don’t have the safe, loving and supportive home environments they need. As a result, they choose to adopt the child Knowing that they can provide the family that this child needs.

The most important reason why adoption is great is the chance that it gives to the same-sex couple who wants to have a child. Clearly, couples from this type cannot have genetically related children naturally so they resort t adoption. Couples from this type who desire to have a child of a certain sex adoption allows them to expand their family in the way they desire.

In conclusion, adoption can change the life of a couple or a child in need. Adoption gives hope to couples who can’t have a biological child. Adaption says that everyone can have their own child even if you are unable to conceive one yourself.

To strengthen the writer’s position, the persuasive essay topic sentences should include a counter-argument, but the writer of this essay chose the opposite. All essay paragraphs start with an argument that supports the claims. The counter-argument in the introductory paragraph appears before the thesis statement, which starts with the adversative DS *nevertheless*. It also appears before the last sentence in the first body paragraph. The content and the organization of this essay are in line with the thesis statement. However, the essay provides only reasons to convince the reader using signals such as “*the first reason is*” and “*the most important reason is*”. Neither hedging nor boosting is used here to convince the reader of the importance of adoption. The use of DS is limited to adversative *however*, *nevertheless*, and causal *as a result*.

The following persuasive essay was taken from another academic year. The students were required to write a whole persuasive essay all at once after practicing essay writing step by step and developing an outline for three essays during the semester.

On-line courses

The disadvantages of on-line courses overweight their advantage. In recent years colleges and universities became using computers and internet in their educational system. In now days, they start offering on-line courses for the students. Therefore, courses can be available for all students around the world. In another hand, on-line courses could have some disadvantages in terms of money, health, and participation.

Some people claim that on-line courses less expensive than regular courses. But, on-line courses need to own computers and other devices that are very expensive. For example, they must buy a microphone for their computers. In addition student may face some technical problems. Also, they must be connected to the internet.

It’s true that on-line courses help students to earn time by getting rid of traffic jam, long distances, dressing up and other things. But, on line courses require to site too long in front of computers screen which might cause health problems. For example, headache, back pain, neck pain, and poor vision. In addition, when students go to the regular course they have to walk which is very healthy.

Although, students can contact and ask questions to their lecturers by massages, they can’t participate fully, they can’t express their thoughts and they can’t discuss or have conversation. Also in regular courses students meet with their classmates thus they can share their ideas and help each other in order to understand the material.

On-line courses became very use in the educational world. But, on-line course can’t replace the regular one. On-line courses must be made for specific student. For example for the students who are old, work, or who live far away from universities.

The structure of the essay does not reflect the persuasive type of essay. For example, the topic sentences of the paragraphs do not include a counter-argument, except the topic sentence of the first body paragraph. The introductory paragraph starts with a contrast between advantages and disadvantages. The background information sentences do not lead to the thesis statement adequately. Some information is missing to connect the topic sentence and the thesis statement. In addition, there is a misuse of the DM at the beginning of the thesis statement; firstly, it should be “*on the other hand*,” and secondly, DM should not be included in the initial position of the thesis statement.

The relationship between online courses and costs is explained fairly in the first body paragraph; however, the ideas in the third paragraph discussing the health consequences of online courses are not logically connected. The writer jumps from one idea to another, employing conjunctions like *but*, *and*, and *also* that connect between sentences. The essay lacks hedgers like *might* and *perhaps*, and boosters like *in fact* that show the relationships between ideas in persuasive essays.

The ideas are neither clear nor supported by evidence. The writing is indirect, and the author tries to reach the same point from different angles, transferring the features of Arabic of indirectness. The essay includes many grammatical, lexical, and mechanical mistakes.

1. Discussion

The analysis of student essays shows that Arab students encounter several problems developing different types of essays. The samples of paragraphs and essays provided in this chapter align with the arguments of many researchers who investigated problems facing Arab students in writing essays (Abdulqader, 2020; Bacha, 2018; Haddad, 2023; Hammad, 2013, Aldera, 2019). For example, many topic sentences are long; some do not reflect the title, and others are not general statements that should include a topic and a controlling idea.

In addition, the paragraphs lack idea development, relevant content, and adequate organization. Other examples show that students start a new topic in the concluding paragraphs. Textual deviation, which Qaddumi (1995) mentioned in some paragraphs, where the writer introduces new ideas that have not been mentioned before. Results also show transfers of features of the Arabic language and cultural modes of thinking. Data analysis shows enough evidence of transferring features of Arabic prose, such as repetition, indirectness, circularity, lack of parallelism, and lack of variation. These findings correlate with the findings and discussions of some Arab scholars like (Abu Rass, 2015; Ahmed, 2016; Al-Khatib, 2001; Almehmadi, 2012; Derrick-Mescua & Gmuca, 1985; Johnstone, 1987; Kaplan, 1966; Sa’adeddin, 1989).

Many paragraphs and essays are not coherent. In addition, these students usually do not adequately indicate the essay’s main idea or purpose. Instead of writing directly, they usually write around the topic, including repetition of phrases before expressing the main statement. Alsamadani (2010) confirms this finding. In addition, the essays reflect weakness in using DMs that represent the relationships between the discussed ideas. For example, they did not use hedges, boosters, attitude, and engagement markers in persuasive-argumentative essays as they should have. The findings of Bacha (2018), Fareh (2014), and Modhesh (2012) support these results.

Most problems stem from the negative transfer of Arabic features like repetition, indirectness, use of a series of clauses, circularity of organization reflected in repeating the same ideas, and frequent paraphrasing. In addition, the claims of Ahmed (2016) and Qaddumi (1995) support the research results concerning starting a new topic in the conclusion. In addition, all samples included problems in syntax, semantics and mechanics, which were discussed in detail in chapter four. Moreover, there is no consistency in indenting the first sentence of each paragraph.

1. Conclusion

This chapter discussed problems facing Arab EFL students writing five-paragraph essays in generating and developing ideas, organizing them logically, and choosing appropriate transition words and cohesive devices to link ideas.

In addition to problems that stem from the first language discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, such as lengthy sentences, excessive use of commas, repetition, parallelism, and lack of variation, Arab EFL students find it difficult to write essays appropriately. Many of them tend not to follow the structure of five-paragraph essays in English, starting their essays with an introductory paragraph that begins with a topic sentence and ends with a thesis statement. They write long introductions referring to history, often irrelevant to the topic. In addition, the purpose of the essay is not always indicated adequately, the topic is discussed neither linearly nor logically, and the conclusion is not wrapped up properly. Many even start a new topic in the conclusion.

The examples of student essays included show that they also transfer the use of cohesive devices in Arabic that express addition, generalization, and repetition, which cause text deviation and lack of coherence in their writing in English. Besides poor paragraph development, their samples lacked logical order of thoughts and academic style.

The analysis of their essays of different genres reveals unfamiliarity with specific features of essays. While many of their expository essays lack relevant details, focus, and objectivity, problem-solution essays reflect inconsistency and inappropriateness in providing solutions. The problems are discussed in some paragraphs, but solutions are not offered. In others, the solution does not match the problem.

Similarly, the sample of comparison-contrast essays demonstrates two problems: a lack of adequate structure in discussing the two topics and a lack of comparison in terms of providing similarities and contrasting, providing differences. There is inconsistency in providing counter-arguments in the topic sentence. One sample has the counter-argument almost at the end of the introductory paragraph, and the second did not include it. The two essays lack hedges and boosters as devices for persuasion.

Chapter 8 provides detailed instructions to acquaint EFL Arab students with the necessary knowledge and tools for writing different essay genres in English.

Chapter 6

Problems Writing Seminar Papers

1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on problems encountered by Arab EFL undergraduate and postgraduate students when writing their final project, a research article (RA), or a research paper (RP). The former is usually required from undergraduate students who write a paper that includes a theoretical and a practical part. However, postgraduate students, who may also be required to conduct a research study and employ qualitative and quantitative methods, submit the latter.

The chapter starts with an overview of the challenges facing these students when developing an argument and ends with specific examples of each difficulty. These challenges stem from a lack of experience in creating high-quality, logically developed, well-written, and cohesively organized texts. A detailed description and explanation of these students’ problems in paraphrasing, summarizing, and synthesizing information from different sources follows. The examples include the lack of awareness of the importance of their voice to relate it to the argument of researchers and experts in their researched topic. After that, the discussion focuses on their tendency to ignore the guidelines provided by the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA), the adopted style in the context of this research, guidelines in terms of in-text citations, and the reference list at the end of the paper. The discussion includes examples of students’ unsystematic inconsistent citation and referencing habits. Chapter 8 deals with these issues and proposes remedies.

1. Challenges Facing EFL Students in Writing Articles and Research Papers

Many studies have shown that writing in English is extremely difficult for EFL students when they are required to produce high-quality products, as is the case in academic settings (McDonough & Shaw, 2003), especially for international students in English-speaking countries, who are most likely have been accustomed to different academic conventions than those applied in Anglophone universities (Braine, 2002). The case must be more acute regarding EFL students who attend local colleges and universities in their own countries and must produce high-quality seminars and research papers (East, 2005; Lee, 2019; Petric, 2007). Arab EFL undergraduate and graduate students are not an exception; they also struggle when they write research papers (RA) as a final project (Altikriti, 2022; Al-Khasawneh, 2010; Al-Zubaidi, 2012; Rabab’ah & Al-Marshadi, 2013; Qasem & Zayid, 2019).

When EFL university or college students write academic papers, they follow certain rules to express structured and comprehensible content, access information, evaluate the writing of others, synthesize their ideas, and opinions, and critically review them (Al-Fadda, 2012). They are expected to paraphrase the language of others, summarize their arguments, understand others’ thought processes, and synthesize this knowledge into their own words (Al-Khasawneh, 2010; Al-Mansour, 2015; Al-Zubaidi, 2012; Rabab’ah & Al-Marshadi, 2013)

Furthermore, writing seminar and research papers requires EFL students to generate ideas, organize information, set writing goals (Smith, 1995), and use vocabulary in abstracting the original text in English, the target language (Uso & Palmer, 1998). Students have to employ different mental activities such as thinking, composing, creating ideas, assessing the relationship between these ideas and the topic’s main idea, and organizing these ideas in order of importance (Abushawish, 2009). To produce good quality academic research papers, students should use “an elaborate structure and an extensive range of vocabulary” (Al-Mansour, 2015, p. 95) to develop their thoughts, following certain governing rules and practices of mechanics such as aspects of punctuation, grammar, and spelling since they are used to show clarity of thought and content (Swales, 2005). These aspects are the focus of Chapter 3, and dealing with them is part of Chapter 8, so they are not included in this chapter.

Academic writing requires “learners to access the relevant references and evaluate them in order to put the different ideas and opinions together” (Al-Fadda, 2012, p. 2) and develop their own voices (Al- Fadda, 2012; Petric’, 2007). It is challenging for EFL students since they need to learn to write based on the work of others but put borrowed ideas and words into their own words and correctly reference them to avoid plagiarism (Abasi and Graves, 2008).

Linking scholarly research to previous work in the same discipline aims to convince “the general audience of the relevance, validity” (Dontcheva-Navratilova, 2012, p. 9). In addition, research writers should be able to outline, summarize, and paraphrase, which adds to the struggles of ESL/EFL learners writing academic texts (Al-Khasawneh & Maher, 2010). Therefore, authors endeavor to create a coherent discourse considered a reliable source of knowledge in their field. To help readers understand their discourse and to limit possible interpretations, scholars as authors of academic research texts use different signals and strategies.

Cognitive, metacognitive (Flower & Hayes, 1984; Graham et al., 2005; Graham & Perin, 2007; Qian, 2007), social, and affective factors influence the quality of academic texts (Qian, 2007). For example, cognitive abilities enable writers to plan, review and write texts. Metacognitive strategies help them comprehend, interpret, plan, translate, evaluate, monitor, revise, and summarize texts (Hayes, 2012). It has been proven that activities that include instruction on text structure, text summarization strategies, and self-regulation strategies are successful in improving writing quality at high school (Graham et al., 2012) and college level (MacArthur et al., 2015). Combining strategy training in text structure with a self-monitoring strategy is more helpful in acquiring writing skills than single-strategy training.

Gu and Brooks (2008) conducted a longitudinal study interviewing ten Chinese students at a UK university. He concluded that knowledge construction and adopting standard conventions in academic communities requires L2 learners to develop a conceptual understanding of knowledge rather than practicing mechanical aspects of citations and referencing.

Authors are also expected to express their position within their academic community, which poses another difficulty for non-native English speakers (NNS) (Hyland & Milton, 1997; Hyland, 2001; Paltridge & Starfield, 2007). In this regard, Hyland (2001) mentions four types of stance markers: self-mentions, attitude markers, boosters, and hedges. While self-mentions refer to the use of personal pronouns *I* and *we* to present propositional, affective, and interpersonal information, attitude markers express the author’s attitude, conveying surprise, agreement, importance, and other attitudes. For example, adverbs like unfortunately, and adjectives like logical and, remarkable, are used to signal the writer’s attitude explicitly. To show an attitude, writers use booster adverbs like “*we obviously do not see…*” and “*this seems highly dubious*”. Hedging is also used to present an opinion. Salager-Meyer (1994 as cited in Hyland, 2005) provides examples of hedging expressed by modals of possibility (*may*, *might*), semi-auxiliaries (*seem*, *appear*), compound hedges (*it may suggest*), adverbs (*probably*), and approximators (*somewhat*, *occasionally*).

Guidelines for writing and publishing research articles are published in style manuals and often expect writers to write prescriptive texts using grammatical constructions such as the passive voice, nominalizations, and an objective, impersonal style, aiming to avoid the personal pronouns *I* and *we* (Flowerdew, 2013). However, personal pronouns could be used to introduce or discuss research methodologies. In addition, it is used to organize arguments and text structures like “*In this paragraph, we report a comparison between...*” and to indicate the attitude of the writer toward their research results or to connect them with the theoretical literature as in “*I argue for*” or “*we concur with*” (Hyland, 1998, pp. 118–119).

Moravcsik and Murugesan (1975) discussed four contrasting features of citations’ functions: conceptual or operational, evolutionary or juxtapositional, organic or perfunctory, and confirmative or negational. While the first set, conceptual or operational, concerns whether a paper is related either to a concept or theory or to a technique or method, the second set, evolutionary or juxtapositional, verifies if the paper is built on the essentials provided by the reference or it is an alternative to it. Organic or perfunctory refers to the need for citations to understand the paper or acknowledge other work in the same field. The fourth set, confirmative or negational, is used to confirm the paper’s findings or to nullify them. The first two sets are related to the connectedness of the scientific development of the paper, and the last two to the quality of citations.

According to Hyland (2000), attribution includes paraphrasing or a quotation, and exemplification necessitates using “*for example*, *as this example shows*, etc.” The writer is expected to indicate further references in parenthesis using the word *see*. Statement of use includes phrases like “*in further analysis, I will rely on…*” and similar formulations. Application is used to connect the citation and the writer’s work to emphasize it. To express evaluation, there is a need to use adverbs in clauses that express evaluation. Evaluation can be done in the following ways: preceding a negative evaluation with a positive evaluation (“*Although I consider…*,” “*I think…*”), expressing criticism directly (“*the main shortcoming*…”), referring to another’s work to show weakness in the work of an author.

Using citations is a big challenge for students (Davis, 2013). However, very few longitudinal studies have been conducted to examine this issue. Swales (1990) introduces types of citations: integral and non-integral. In the former type, the cited author’s name is included in the sentence, and in the latter, the cited author’s name is placed outside the text either in parenthesis or in footnotes. While the researcher is emphasized in the first type, the research is stressed in the second.

Petric’s (2007) study compares eight high-rated master’s theses and low-rated ones written by second-language writers from 12 Central and Eastern European countries. Results show that citation use, and thesis grade correlated. Acquiring citation strategies helps students to achieve academic success. Attribution was the most commonly used, which helped writers present knowledge of the literature in the topic field. However, it appeared more in the low-rated theses, which were descriptive rather than argumentative. In addition, low-rated theses included less complex citation types that require analytical skills and appraised the author instead of appraising the work. However, the authors of the high-rated related the subject studies to the extended academic literature, demonstrating analytical ability.

Limited research exploring the challenges and difficulties Arab undergraduate students face when conducting their graduation project has been done. Where studies do exist, their focus is on students’ attitudes toward writing research papers. However, recently, an increasing number of research studies have investigated the challenges faced by EFL Arab students at the undergraduate and graduate levels in writing research papers, seminar papers, theses, and dissertations in their home countries, English-speaking countries, and Malaysia. For example, Qasem and Zayid (2019) conducted a study to explore the challenges that sixty undergraduate students face when writing proposals and research projects in English. They were in their final year at the College of Science and Arts, Al Namas, University of Bisha, Saudi Arabia. The students, drawn from the Departments of English and Computer Science, conducted their research projects in English as a Second Language (ESL). Data collection includes administering a questionnaire and conducting formal interviews with students and their instructors. Results show that the main challenge of 70% of the participants is writing research in English. Around 50% prefer to write in Arabic, their L1. Findings also show that the participants faced difficulties in choosing the topic for research and were unable to use recent and relevant sources. They also lacked substantial knowledge of the methodology, interest in conducting research, understanding of the subject matter, time management skills, and needed research guidance that was not forthcoming.

Similar results were reported by Al-Qaderi (2016), who examined the challenges facing undergraduate students writing their graduation research projects in English at Ibb University, Yemen. Besides poor English proficiency and weak academic research skills, the university library is poorly stocked with resources and poorly subscribed to open-access electronic resources. In addition, the students lack the self-motivation required to conduct research. Altikriti (2022), who investigated the difficulties and problems that Jordanian undergraduate students of the English language and literature major in the Department of English at Alzaytoonah University of Jordan (ZUJ), reported similar results. Data collection was based on administering a questionnaire designed to examine three issues: attitude about writing a research paper, methodology challenges, and background knowledge about research. Forty-five undergraduate students responded. Results revealed that these students lacked the pre-requisite academic skills for writing an RP, including the necessary knowledge of the research paper writing process, sources, and methodology.

Few studies investigate the challenges that face Arab Palestinian EFL students from Israel. Recently, Chaleila and Garra-Alloush (2019) examined the most common academic writing errors of 44 undergraduate EFL Palestinian Arab students from Israel, including in-text citations. Results show that only 11.4% of the participants acknowledged the cited source adequately, and 56.8% acknowledged them partially. Some students used in-text citations without including the relevant entry in the reference list or used an incorrect citation style. The remaining 31.8% used sources without acknowledging them. The researchers attributed these results to differences between Arabic and English regarding citations.

Besides the challenges mentioned above, postgraduate students should have full mastery of the skills needed to develop an acceptable academic research paper (Wang & Yang, 2012). For example, they should be “engaged in doing the enquiry of finding out about something important to the researched topic, be able to connect their work to the others who previously discussed the same topic and related it to theories in the field, creating a theoretical orientation and developing a methodological approach. In addition, researchers should consider ethical issues” (Monash University, 2014, p.2), receiving the approval of the research authority or center in their universities and the participants in the research, keeping confidentiality, protecting privacy, and declaring no conflict of interests.

To identify controversial issues, there is a need to establish links between sources by comparing and contrasting them to show similarities and differences, especially in the discussion of findings section, confirming or disconfirming them. Mahboob and Ahmed (2016) analyzed the research proposals of 32 postgraduate students in the Department of Medicine, Lady Reading Hospital in Pakistan, and found that these students face many challenges. For example, they face difficulties in research methodology, formulating research questions and hypotheses, providing theoretical frameworks, writing the introduction, gathering information, collecting data, setting objectives, and citing references.

Alfakih (2017) summarizes the requirements of the writing process of research papers in the following table.

TABLE 32 The main components of a research proposal and their functions

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Component | Subcomponent | Function |
| 1. Cover page | ---- | • Identifying topic, writer, institution, and degree |
| 2. Introduction | 2.1 Background | • Answering WHAT questions, including providing background information about the context of the study. |
| 2.2 Need for study/ rationale | • Answering WHY questions, including persuading the reader that the study is needed and will be useful/interesting. |  |
| 2.3 Aim and objectives | • Stating clearly and succinctly the aim and objectives of the study. |  |
| 2.4 Research questions/ hypotheses | • Formulating research questions/ hypotheses. |  |
| 2.5 Significance/ expected outcomes | • Answering SO WHAT questions, including on the significance of the study and expected outcomes |  |
| 3. Review of literature | ---- | • Providing a brief review of significant literature and current research in the field and indicating on which issues/topics the full review will focus |
| 4. Methodology | 4.1 Research design | • Answering HOW, WHEN, WHERE, and WHO questions, including outlining and describing the type of information and sources to be used, the main methods/instruments to be employed and when and where, data collection and analysis procedures, study subjects or participants, and any ethical or safety issues identified. |
| 4.2 Timetable/Plan | • Depicting the tasks proposed and the stages/times for their completion. |  |
| 4.3 Proposed thesis structure | • Describing the sequence and focus of each proposed chapter |  |
| 5. References | ---- | • Listing all publications cited in the proposal, using a suitable academic referencing style. |

A training program to enhance postgraduate students’ research skills in preparing a research proposal in the Field of curriculum and instruction methods of Arabic language Alfakih (2017, p. 2.)

Postgraduate students should have full mastery of the necessary skills and steps to develop an acceptable academic paper (Wang & Yang, 2012). For example, they should be engaged in doing the enquiry of finding out about something important to the researched topic, be able to connect their work to the others who previously discussed the same topic and related it to theories in the field, creating a theoretical orientation and developing a methodological approach. In addition, researchers should consider ethical issues (Monash University, 2014, p.2), ensuring no conflict of interest, protecting participants’ confidentiality and privacy, and obtaining the approval of local research authorities.

By employing a self-monitoring strategy, writers can evaluate their work, produce better texts, evaluate the targeted message of the text, and indicate the mismatch between them (Cho et al., 2010). These authors examined the development of self-monitoring skills through self-evaluation and peer feedback and the correlation with writing quality. They found that students with well-developed self-monitoring skills were able to enhance the quality of their writing. Harris et al. (1994) reported similar results. In addition, students achieved higher scores when they monitored their performance.

Arab ESL/EFL learners struggle similarly to other students from different nationalities. For example, Arab EFL postgraduates in Malaysia lack basic academic literacy skills (Al-Zubaidi, 2012) and experience serious difficulties in dealing with citations (Al-Zubaidi, 2012) or references (Al-Khasawneh, 2010; Al-Zubaidi, 2012; Rabab’ah & Al-Marshadi, 2013). Arabic-speaking learners usually struggle with writing because it requires advanced cognitive and linguistic abilities (Al-Zubaidi, 2012).

East (2005) discusses problems concerning the acknowledgment of sources, and authors depending on context, culture, and knowledge. For example, whether an idea is common knowledge is subjective and depends on the writer’s familiarity with the topic. Lee (2019) compared high-graded and low-graded persuasive essays by 12 international and local undergraduate students in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) class at an Australian university. Results show significant differences between high and low-rated essays in attributing sources. High-rated essays included a balanced integration of the sources, and the authors’ own writing, while low-rated essays contained either too much or too little attribution to sources, with a lack of awareness of how to attribute and retain an authorial voice.

Recently, this issue started to receive researchers’ attention in other countries. For years, it was examined solely in Anglo-Saxon countries. For instance, Pietersen (2014) analyzed the content of RPs of Master’s degree students in South Africa and found that these students neither understood the components of the RP nor concentrated on the research question. Manchishi et al. (2015), who investigated the common mistakes of postgraduate Zambian students when writing RPs, reported similar findings. The researchers of both studies recommend including the research process and relevant aspects of writing in the EFL writing curriculum and programs at the university level.

Similarly, addressing these issues started to gain momentum in Arab colleges and universities just recently. For instance, Alfakih (2017) examined the impact of a training program on developing seven Saudi postgraduate students’ research skills in preparing a research proposal, administering a questionnaire, and employing a pretest and post-test exam. Selecting the content and the activities to address the needs of postgraduate students to prepare for writing their RPs was based on a related literature review. Materials were posted on the website for the course, and the students were required to read them and do the activities. Comparing the pretest and post-test results show that the participants improved in the required skills for conducting research and writing papers, indicating the potential of effective instruction for improving the graduate students’ research skills.

Jomaa and Bidin (2017) examined problems faced by EFL Arab doctoral students in an Information Technology department, specifically in citing and integrating information from different sources into the literature review chapter of their PhD proposals. Results show that these students lacked awareness and had insufficient knowledge about using citations in academic writing. They also had limited instruction on using citations during their attendance in academic writing courses, and the only feedback about citing and using citations they received was from their supervisor.

Reviewing literature regarding challenges facing EFL undergraduate and graduate students shows they struggle when writing academic research papers in English. They encounter difficulties paraphrasing and summarizing texts, synthesizing information from different sources, developing texts logically, and producing them cohesively. In many cases, they are accused of plagiarism. All of these problems are described in detail below and followed by students’ examples.

* 1. Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing means changing the words of an original text into the writer’s own words. It is characterized by Keck (2006) as an attempt to closely copy the original source except for one or two changes. It involves three kinds of revisions: minor, moderate, and substantial. While the former includes incorporating a few lexical changes, the latter includes making several. The third category, substantial revision, is more challenging since it requires many lexical and syntactic changes. It is one of the most challenging issues for international students (Flowerdew & Li, 2007; Keck, 2006). Evidence from different research studies shows that non-native speakers face difficulty using their own words due to a lack of mastery over English vocabulary (Keck, 2006; Pennycook, 1996; Schmidt, 2006). They are more likely to use a strategy near copying and less likely to achieve a substantial paraphrase of the source text than native speakers (Keck, 2006).

Howard (1933) describes poor attempts at paraphrasing as patchwriting, which he defines as “copying from a source text and then deleting some words, altering grammatical structures, or plugging in one-for-one synonym-substitutes” (p.233). Patchwriting can be expected as a stage of development of source use when students do not know how to voice their views clearly or do not know enough about a subject to do so (Howard, 1995).

Patchwriting could be at the local level or the global one (Abasi & Akbari, 2008). While the former refers to using close appropriation of vocabulary and grammar, the latter refers to the conceptual level regarding “ineffective appropriation at the level of ideas” (Abasi & Akbari, 2008, p. 271). Recent studies focus on other issues like authorship, voice, attitudes to knowledge, and educational practices, which show that L2 students use patchwriting because they are unaware of its potential consequences (Pecorari & Petric, 2014), or hold naïve conceptions about source texts as being unquestionable and see citing as an application of citation rules (Abasi & Graves, 2008). In an earlier study, Abasi et al. (2006) found that experienced writers expressed text authorship more than inexperienced ones who used more patchwriting, excluding themselves as authors who can argue with other authors, expressing their approval or disapproval. Authors of texts that exhibited numerous instances of patchwriting did not perceive themselves as authors who could argue or disagree with other authors. However, the results of Abasi and Akbari’s (2008) study on the inappropriate use of sources by international students and the attitude of 12 professors in a Canadian university show that faculty members may inadvertently encourage patchwriting since they impose unrealistic demands on students who employ it to cope with these demands.

Many research studies were conducted to determine the reasons behind patchwriting or students’ transgressive textual appropriation (Abasi & Akbari, 2008), which was also called ‘‘apparent plagiarism” (Currie, 1998), ‘‘textual plagiarism” (Pecorari, 2003), or ‘‘transgressive intertextuality” (Chandrasoma et al., 2004), aiming to distinguish it from plagiarism as intellectual fraud. Many factors were identified, such as language proficiency, task or text difficulty, or topical unfamiliarity (Campbell, 1990; Shi, 2004). Others attributed the difficulties to unfamiliarity with the Western academic culture, including the perception of plagiarism as a crime (LoCastro & Masuko, 2002; Moon, 2002). Recent studies focused on cultural and pre-educational experiences perception to gain knowledge and claim text authorship, which is odd to Western norms (Shi, 2006; Abasi & Graves, 2008). Therefore, they employ coping strategies for academic survival (Currie, 1998; Rinnert & Kobayashi, 2005). Others included the unfamiliarity of academic rules and conventions in high schools (Abasi, Akbari, & Graves, 2006; Flowerdew & Li, 2007; Sherman, 1992). Other studies have stressed that the requirements of academic tasks might be demanding and not match the background knowledge and language ability of EFL students (Pennycook, 1994). Al-Zubaidi (2012) attributes these problems to a prior school culture that students may have had, giving the example of Arab EFL graduate students in Malaysian universities who have more experience memorizing information than criticizing arguments or asking questions.

* 1. Summarizing

Summarizing a text requires writers to reproduce it, selecting the most important information and deleting unimportant and repeated information. Results of a research study conducted by Hidi and Anersons (1986) show developmental differences between novice and advanced writers. The former summarized texts by deleting and copying, and the latter emphasized the intended message of the text. A study by Li (2014) on summary texts written by undergraduates showed a correlation between summarizing well-structured genres and writing quality. If the text is well structured, the writing quality will be high. In addition, combining cognitive and metacognitive strategy training was also obvious in writing good-quality abstracts. In the group that received combined strategy training with the self-monitoring strategy, their abstracts were a higher than those who received combined training with the summarization strategy.

* 1. Synthesizing

Synthesizing sources involves combining the work of other researchers in the same field to provide insights. The author is expected to integrate sources in their discussion, especially in the theoretical part and the discussion of the research results, which would help situate their work relative to available research (Maggin & Chafouleas, 2013). Synthesizing goes beyond summarizing the ideas and results of other research studies. It requires authors to show how each source contributes to the current discussion, emphasizing agreement and disagreement with other authors. The aim is to draw generalized theoretical and practical conclusions across related, accumulated, and analyzed research studies (Rosenthal & DiMatteo, 2001).

Synthesis requires “professional judgment, experience, and creativity” (Andrews & Harlen, 2006, p. 292). Professional judgment refers to evaluating and assessing the relativeness of the theories and practices mentioned in the research articles. To synthesize successfully, authors should have experience in evaluating the research and finding a great level of generalization. Creativity, as a third element of synthesis, requires authors to transform the results of different studies into a unified unit. In advanced-level research papers, including theses and dissertations, avoiding systematic bias determines the methodological quality of the study (Shadish et al., 2002).

Andrews and Harlen (2006) mentioned two types of synthesis. Meta-analysis “is a specific tool involving the statistical combination of data” (p. 292) that leads to a quantitative summary of the research findings (Davies et al., 2000). Narrative synthesis is more than summary and directed writing; it draws conclusions based on the results of the studies analyzed, “achieving the best possible account of the research being examined” (Andrews & Harlen, 2006, p. 294). It involves an author trying to make sense of the relevant evidence in different research articles. Creativity happens when the results of different related studies are transformed into a unified whole.

Andrews & Harlen (2006) summarized the main issues in synthesizing research, such as having a clear and manageable research question, coping with the difficulty of dealing with immensely different studies, considering the possibility of meta-analysis, expecting unexpected changes of narrative synthesis, considering a synthesis of quantitative and qualitative results, including how to do that, and minimizing bias.

Synthesizing includes an integral citation of the work of others and attribution (acknowledging the words and ideas of other authors (East, 2005), employing reporting verbs that are either evaluative or non-evaluative. While the former indicates the writer’s position relative to the source (such as “argue” or “claim”), the latter indicates the writer’s neutrality to the research (such as “state” and “report”) (Hyland, 2004; Swales, 1990).

Davis (2013) examined the use of sources by students pursuing their master’s degrees in business, technology, and public relations in the UK, focusing on assignments of three Chinese students using citation, reporting verbs, and attributing arguments to other researchers. Data analysis shows that participants started at different points, progressed differently, and did not all reach a competent level. Participants also developed some individual strategies such as relying on a small range of features, over-citation, and copying sections of attributed text, especially internet sources, mentioning that in previous research, it was acceptable to copy texts and attribute them. In addition, results also show a limited range of citation and reporting verbs.

* 1. Plagiarism

Plagiarism is “the practice of taking someone else’s work or ideas and passing them off as one’s own” (*Oxford English Online Dictionary*), which is elaborated in academic contexts to specify the intellectual property and discourse authorship (Pecorari & Petric, 2014). Park (2003) defines it as “literary theft, stealing (by copying) the words or ideas of someone else and passing them off as one’s own without crediting the source” (p. 472), which is included in academic institutions in English speaking countries as a crime that deserves punishment (Pecorari, 2001). As a result, plagiarism is considered “a moral transgression and a reflection of moral decay” (Pecorari & Petric, 2014, p. 271).

Opposing claims have been heard recently by other researchers who criticize the practice of accusing L2 students of plagiarism, claiming that students who plagiarize unintentionally may not be familiar with citation rules and conventions, referencing skills, or L2 sources (Casanave, 2012; Pecorari & Petric’, 2014; Pecorari, 2003; Petric’ 2004; Flowerdrew & Li, 2007; Sherman, 1992). Pecorari and Petric (2014) reviewed several research studies regarding plagiarism. They concluded that the discussion against plagiarism oversimplifies the students’ task because L2 students encountering a new discourse do not have the linguistic ability to write about academic or discipline-related topics in English. Therefore, they rely on sources to write about these topics.

Other research studies that discuss issues that affect the range of plagiarism, such as the role of the electronic media, the potential effect of culture, and methods of instruction that would help learners avoid plagiarism, are reviewed below.

Abasi and Graves (2008) investigated institutional plagiarism policies regarding ESL students’ academic writing and their effects on professor-student relationships, explaining difficulties encountered by ESL international students. Most interviewed professors consider developing an argued claim to knowledge as the essence of academic writing. ESL students are expected to have an authorial voice and be familiar with the research literature in terms of evaluating the arguments in published sources and critically analyze them without taking them as absolute truth (Hass & Flower, 1988; Spivey & King, 1989). These professors discussed several reasons for the inappropriate use of sources, such as language competence, time pressure, poor citation practices, unfamiliarity with academic genres, and unfamiliarity with scholars’ discussions and discourse in their fields. In addition, they demonstrated an understanding of the difficulties these students encounter, stressing that ESL students do not intend to cheat and that citation should be part of the learning process.

Abasi and Graves (2008) conclude that professors expect students to have an authorial voice, but international students rely heavily on borrowing from sources without expressing creativity due to a lack of practice in thinking, reading, and writing about topics in their fields. They usually cull materials from sources and put them together without developing an argument, marginalizing their voices.

Perceptions of borrowing words and ideas without indicating the source could also be attributed to cultural differences and prior educational experiences (Abasi & Graves, 2008; Shi, 2006). For example, Moon (2002) claims that Korean students tend to copy because it has been allowed in Korean academic culture, although he mentions that the situation is changing.

The study of Rinnert and Kobayashi (2005) examined the perceptions of Japanese university students concerning plagiarism in the L1 academic context in Japan. They administered a questionnaire and conducted interviews to generate responses from 605 undergraduate and 110 graduate Japanese students, comparing the level of pursued degrees (undergraduate versus graduate students) and educational majors (science versus liberal arts). It also included a cross-cultural comparison with 76 responses from undergraduate students who are native speakers of English in the US. Results show that Japanese students are less aware of citation conventions than American students. In addition, students majoring in liberal arts (humanities and social sciences) demonstrated more knowledge by giving credits to text authors than those who majored in science (computer science, engineering, and physical science).

However, some researchers debunked claims that plagiarism is acceptable in Asian contexts. For example, Ha (2006) asserts that plagiarism has identical or even more negative consequences in Vietnamese academic settings than in Anglophone contexts. Liu (2005) expressed similar perspectives in China towards plagiarism and described it “as an immoral practice that has existed in China for a long time” (p. 235). Tang (2012), an EFL researcher, claims this notion is based on assumptions rather than evidence.

Another case study conducted by Stapleton (2010) on advanced second-language writing from electronic sources shows that the problematic use of these sources is more acute at this level. For example, a Chinese student pursuing her M.A degree in TESOL resorted to the Internet for a 3,000-word assignment, doing non-academic searches, using unreliable internet sources such as forums, and cutting and pasting from the sources. Due to the instructor’s warnings, she made partial changes when creating her text. As Stapleton concludes, “new tools and resources come with caveats” (p. 304).

Al Darwish and Sadeqi (2016) employed a methodology based on a simple questionnaire and a student journal to 121 female Kuwaiti students who majored in English, aiming to understand why they plagiarize. These students passed the first writing course and enrolled in the advanced one. Findings revealed that the participants plagiarized in their writing in English, mainly from the Internet, to get good grades and pass the course since most have difficulties expressing themselves in EFL writing and coming up with ideas. Results also show that they are aware of their lack of understanding of how to give credit to sources. In addition, they lack training in citing sources and referencing.

* 1. Producing Cohesive Texts

As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, the use of cohesive devices enhances text continuity and semantic unity, making it an important aspect of discourse coherence. Therefore, analyzing indexical devices aims to provide evidence by showing how indexicals with anaphoric and deictic interpretations contribute to discourse coherence. In academic research papers, the frequency of personal pronouns is usually lower than in other types of texts (Biber et al. 1999), which could be attributed to the perception that academic research is empirical and objective (Hyland, 2001a; Harwood, 2005) that is in agreement with most academic manuals that emphasize avoiding personal references (Bennett, 2009; Flowerdew, 2013). However, including personal pronouns in research articles maintains the relationship between the writer and the reader and allows the author to include their voice (Flowerdew, 2013).

Dontcheva-Navratilova (2012) investigated the role of indexical devices in fostering discourse coherence in a corpus of twelve research articles in linguistics, mainly considering the potential of personal pronouns and demonstratives to create cohesive links. The targeted pronouns were (*I/me/my*, *you/your*, *he/him/his*, *she/her*, *it/its*, *we/us/our*) and demonstratives (*this/these* and *that/those*). The researcher employed a combined qualitative and quantitative method for data collection and analysis from a corpus of twelve research articles. Six are single-authored, six co-authored, and were published in Applied Linguistics between 2000 and 2010. Results show that the interpretation of personal pronouns and demonstratives created cohesive links that enhanced coherence in terms of referent continuity and topic organization in the discourse. For example, it has been noticed that the author-reference pronouns I and we helped in creating cohesive chains throughout the texts. The former was used when the article had a single author and the latter for having more than one author. In addition, the repeated occurrences of these pronouns were found mainly in abstracts, introductions, and conclusions.

A study by Povolná (2012) aimed to explore whether there is a cross-cultural variation in the use of certain text organizers, also called discourse markers (DM), in academic texts. These DM mainly express semantic relations such as apposition (*namely*, *for example*, *for instance*), result/reference (*as a consequence*, *now*, *for this reason*, *in that case*), contrast/ concession (*however*, *still*, *nevertheless*). The assumption is that these markers enhance the interaction between authors and readers. The researcher analyzed two corpora of research articles. The first included research articles written by native speakers of English (Anglo-American), and the second was written by non-native speakers of English, mainly from the Czech Republic. The research studies mentioned in Chapter 5 (Modhesh, 2012; Fareh, 2014; Ibnian, 2017; Aldera, 2016) regarding producing cohesive texts show that cohesion and coherence pose difficulties for Arab students writing in English.

It could be concluded that writing research articles and papers is very difficult for Arab EFL undergraduate and postgraduate students. Due to their lack of experience, they struggle to produce high-quality texts that meet academic requirements. Many of them find paraphrasing, summarizing, and synthesizing information from different sources difficult. They resort to patchwriting and plagiarism as the easiest and fastest way to discuss issues from different sources. Including their voices as authors and relating them to the research of other scholars poses another difficulty. Not to mention citing others and ignoring the referencing style guidelines for including authors in texts and the reference list.

Based on the discussion of difficulties encountered by Arab EFL students in writing their papers, the texts and errors of undergraduate and graduate students are analyzed in the following section.

1. Analysis of the Writing of the Undergraduate Students

At the undergraduate level, these students attend a semester course in their second year of B. Ed studies, majoring in EFL, that prepares the students to write their final project, a research paper (RA). They are expected to submit a paper of seven to ten pages. Following the introduction, the first three to four pages are dedicated to the literature review, followed by the practical section, where they write about their experience. Since I teach the pedagogical course, didactic seminar, and academic writing course, I recommend topics related to education in general, linguistics, and EFL pedagogy. After analyzing the content of articles, modeling paraphrasing, summarizing, and synthesizing information from different sources, the students gradually practice paraphrasing, summarizing, and synthesizing in and outside of class, following the process approach. Instruction and practice include using reported verbs, unbiased language, an authorial voice, and correct referencing. Students submit drafts in stages and receive feedback. Despite this training, the first drafts are usually characterized by incidents of plagiarism. Some students blatantly copy paragraphs that should be paraphrased or summarized. The more advanced students use patchwriting, replacing one or two keywords only. Despite constant feedback, modeling, and error analysis in class, the first draft of the theoretical part includes much plagiarism.

In addition to plagiarism, most students focus on one author, and their samples look like a summary of one article rather than a discussion about the topic, including different authors’ perspectives. In many cases, their drafts are like a list of unconnected ideas. If they provide more than one source, they usually ignore the importance of linking the ideas and discussions provided by different scholars. Including their voices seems to be the hardest. Although they are reminded in each draft to do that, the majority do not include their voices or positions. They seem to have not internalized the rules of integral and non-integral in-text citation.

The following sample is taken from the first draft of the first page of the theoretical part.

In the *book A Course in Language Teaching* Penny Ur resumes learner differences in these main categories: “Learner populations differ according to various parameters: whether the learners are beginner, intermediate or advanced; whether they are young children, adolescent or adult; their objectives in learning the language, and how they are motivated; whether their environment outside the classroom is target-language or mother-tongue; how heterogeneous or homogenous the class is; the size of the group; and many more.” (Ur 1991: p.273)

Age and educational level: At primary school the students are divided into class according to the group of age, so we do not need to deal with the topic of younger and older learners and the different approach to them. As these learners are approximately of the same age, these students should have somehow similar view of the world and their knowledge.

Attitude to the language: The attitude that a student should have to the foreign language is a perception of values. Some of the students are achieving much more because their attitude towards studying is higher than of the other ones. The student’s attitude may be closely connected to the motivation.

Language knowledge: The main observed difference among the learners is the amount of language they know. But also the knowledge itself may have the roots in all sorts of other reasons besides ability. It could be for example previous studying of the foreign language, teacher’s attitude, the motivation from the side of the teacher, etc. Some of the students know more - more vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, etc. but the others are not so successful.

The writer of this sample violates many rules and conventions. First, she mentions the author’s full name in the first sentence without mentioning the year of publication. Second, including the source at the end of the long quotation does not follow the APA style guidelines, which was practiced in class and requires having a comma after the surname, and a comma separating the year of publication and the page number. There is no need to include the letter “p,” which indicates that the page number in the source should not be included. Third, the full stop at the end of the sentence should be placed after the bracket.

In this sample, the writer almost mentioned nothing using her own words, and the word “resume” is not the right choice, which confuses the reader. In the other paragraphs, the student simply copied information from the book, relying on one source only. Neither reported verbs, nor discourse markers are used to develop an argument, connect it to other sources, and organize it logically to have a coherent text.

The author of this sample was one of the advanced students in class.

1.1 What is vocabulary?

Vocabulary is the list of words or their combinations that a person or a group of people of a particular language needs in order to communicate with each other (Hatch & Brown, 1995; Katerina Joklova, 2009; Jorge Leonardo, 2011).

1.2 Types of vocabulary: Leonardo (2011) states that vocabulary usually grows and evolves with age and interests as an essential tool for communication for acquiring knowledge. He divides vocabulary into four types:

1.2.1 Reading vocabulary: It includes all the words a person can recognize when reading. This is generally the largest type of vocabulary because a reader tends to be exposed to more words by reading than by listening.

1.2.2 Listening vocabulary: Similarly, listening vocabulary means all the words a person can recognize when listening to others. People may still understand words they were not exposed to before using cues such as tone, gestures, the topic of discussion and the social context of the conversation.

1.2.3 Speaking vocabulary: This type of vocabulary includes all the words a person uses in speech, and it is likely to be part of the listening vocabulary.

1.2.4 Writing vocabulary: Words are used in various forms of writing (formal and informal). Many written words do not commonly appear in speech; writers generally use a limited set of words when communicating; for example, if there are a number of synonyms, a writer will have his own preference as to which of them to use, or, he is unlikely to use technical vocabulary related to a subject in which he has no knowledge or interest.

Similarly, this sample violates the rules of citations. The first paragraph includes patchwriting, more than total plagiarism. The writer changed some words to define vocabulary using some sources. However, including authors’ full names does not match the guidelines that require writers to include the author’s last name for in-text citations. Like the first sample, the student relied on one source to define the topic in detail, using the descriptive rather than the required argumentative style.

The following sample discusses the concept of giving homework assignments in schools.

Until the 20th century homework was scarcely perceived as an issue (Gill and Schlossman, 2004).

In addition, in the beginning of the 20th century, educators were convinced that homework can discipline minds for students (Marzano and Pickering,2007).

However, then a growing concern started to grow about the disadvantages of homework.

For instance, a claim that homework risks childrens’ health was supported by medical researches. Gill and Schlossman, 2004).

The sample shows a violation of in-text citations, having the citation outside the boundary of the sentence and paragraph structure. The student wrote each argument separately, making the paragraph a list of ideas more than a paragraph. No argument here reflects the controversy of giving homework in schools. Despite the use of transition words, the text is not coherent since it includes neither examples nor details to explain the scholars’ claims regarding homework assignments’ importance or lack of importance. The writer did not succeed in developing an argument showing the two perspectives. In addition, the author’s voice is absent here.

The following sample discusses motivation as a crucial factor for students’ success.

There are particular factors that enhance students’ motivation. One of these factors is the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Individuals who are motivated intrinsically tend to develop high regard for learning course information, without the use of external rewards or reinforcement. Otherwise, individuals who are motivated extrinsically rely solely on rewards and desirable results for their motivation. (Tohidi, Jabbari, 2011 & Vero, Puka, 2017 &Williams, Williams, 2011)

Similarly, besides making errors in in-text citations and employing patchwriting, the writer did not develop an argument regarding enhancing student motivation successfully. For example, there is no *and* or *&* between the authors’ last names for the same source. In addition, the student used an ampersand instead of a semicolon to separate the different authors. The concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are neither well-developed nor supported by explanations and examples. Moreover, it lacks the author’s position.

The topic of the RA was including human values in EFL instruction.

Hassim and Chaibi believe that “values are expressions of the absolute truths a community holds.” (p. 28)

This sample shows that the student did not properly use integral and non-integral in-text citations. The publication year does not follow the last names of the authors. In addition, the page number appears after the end of the sentence.

1. Analysis of Postgraduate Students’ Writing

I have been an adviser for EFL postgraduate students who pursue their M. Ed in different teacher training colleges in Israel; submitting a research paper is one of the requirements for graduating. It is important to note that training in writing research papers using different sources and conducting research is limited. Besides the regular writing classes that focus on paragraph and essay development, they attend a workshop of four meetings to expose them to conducting research. The guidelines for developing the final project, RA, are posted on the course website. Students are encouraged and reminded to read and follow them systematically. Recently, the students in M. Ed programs have been required to employ qualitative methods for conducting their research as well as quantitative ones. The process of submitting the final draft of the RA includes submitting the proposal, drafts of the theoretical part, and drafts of the practical part, as it is needed. After approving these drafts, the student submits the whole paper, which is subject to revisions too.

The following scripts are from research papers written by postgraduate students majoring in EFL.

1. A significant amount of literature explored the potential of computer technology regarding teaching and learning languages more effectively (Egbert, Hanson-Smith 1999). Numerous experimental studies comparing computer assisted instruction with traditional teacher-directed instruction have been conducted in the past decades (Wu, Yen &Marek, 2011). However, little research was conducted to explore the effect of computer assisted instruction on learning reading strategies.

2. What is more? Craig (2003) states that the use of text messages does not threat the improvement of literacy among teenage students. In fact, he describes this language as phonetic replacement which is one of the most noticeable elements of instant messaging; For example, when using phonetic replacements, nouns such as “everyone” become“every1,” and prepositions such as “to” become “2.” For Craig this process is considered a word play which has an important effect in the development of advanced literacy. When learners send text messaging, they learn how words are tied together to express ideas, and, thus, they internalize many phases of language play (Craig, 2003). Besides, Tagg, C., Baron, A., & Rayson, P. (2012) claim that not only text messaging language follows most of the orthographic patterns of language, but also it contributes to the social relations of users.

3. Providing support and motivating students in education is essential especially when learning a new foreign language, English. Whereas Ellis (year) states that “motivation is more of an effective than a cognitive factor and, even more so than learning style, is adaptable. It is the second of the “big two” individual factors, accounting for only slightly less of the variance in learners’ achievement scores than language aptitude”, In addition, Ortega (2009) says that “motivation involves the attitudes and affective states that influence the degree of effort that learners make to learn a second language” (p.75). Furthermore, Lightbown and Spada (year) define motivation in second language learning as a complex phenomenon. “It has been defined in terms of two factors: on the one hand, learners’ communicative needs, and, on the other, their attitudes towards the second language community.”(p. 63)

4. According to Masgoret and Gardner (2003), “although the research cannot prove that positive attitudes and motivation cause success in learning, there is ample evidence that positive motivation is associated with a willingness to keep learning.”(p. 63). Similarly, Lightbown & Spada (year) claimed that although no ample researches has directly studied how pedagogy interacts with motivation in second language classroom, great work has been done within the field of educational psychology. (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p. 65).

In addition to plagiarism and other language problems, these samples show inconsistency in in-text citations. While in the first example, the writer included the first and last names of the authors, in the second sample, they followed the in-text citation guidelines once before immediately violating these rules in the following paragraph by mentioning the authors’ initials.

The third example shows that the writer partially followed the guidelines by mentioning the author’s name, but not the year of publication. In addition, the inconsistency is reflected in integral-and non-integral in-text citations, mentioning the source after the end of the sentence. In the second sentence, quotation marks are not included to indicate the direct quote. Moreover, despite the students’ attempts to use transition words, the discourse is not coherent since they did not use stance markers such as self-mentions, attitude markers, boosters, and hedges to express their position.

The following script appears in the discussion section of the paper.

5. In order to improve the learning motivation of EFL tertiary students, speciﬁc teaching strategies are recommended. Strategies such as creating a supportive and nonthreatening learning environment, maximizing learners’ participation and language practice, enhancing the cohesiveness and positive interdependence of learning groups as well as facilitating learner autonomy (Busser & Walter 2013; Dörnyei 1997, 2001; Jacobs & Goh 2007; Liu 2007; Ning 2011).

Despite synthesizing information from different sources, the author neither connected the relevant pieces of information nor provided specific examples of these strategies and how they could maximize learning, leaving that to the reader.

The following two samples focus on one author or two.

6. Studies examining the reasons for the difficulties of acquiring English as an L2 suggested that children learning English are influences by their own native language, through what the literature referred to as negative transfer (Saiegh-Haddad and Geva, 2010). The idea of linguistic transfer first appeared as a key concept in the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (Lado, 1957; cited in Saiegh-Haddad and Geva, 2010). Based on this hypothesis, it is possible to explain, and even predict, which features of L2 will cause difficulties to the L2 learner based on linguistic analysis of the structure of the L2 and the learner native language; Arabic. Saiegh-Haddad and Geva (2010) reported about the difficulties in mastering certain aspect of L2 because of the interference of L1. They argued that when the transfer occurs in similarly structured languages, the transfer is a positive one, easing on the learner to acquire the L2. However, if the L2 and L1 are structured differently, such as the case of Arabic (L1) and English (L2), negative transfer occurs from L1 to L2, resulting in interference.

7. Contrastive Analysis (CA) is a theory that is primarily concerned with the influence of learners’ native language on the acquisition process of a FL or a SL (Ara, 2021). Through comparing the native language of the learners and the target language (TL), it is possible to identify potential errors. CA makes it possible for teachers and researchers to focus on which areas in the native language that is the source of learners’’ errors (Gass, et al., 2013).

The underlying assumption of the theory is that the already established learning habits of the learners would interfere with forming new habits in the target language. According to Ara (2021), a transfer takes place when the learners try to apply the rules and forms of their native language to the language that they are trying to acquire, or to the target language. She adds that if there is similarities between the two languages (TL and NL) positive transfer will happen. However, negative transfer or interference will occur if some of the forms and grammatical structures in both languages are not similar. Ara (2020) postulates that the negative transfer is the source of majority of the errors committed by the learners.

In the above two samples, the students focused on only one or a maximum of two authors for discussing negative transfer in the first paragraph and contrastive analysis in the second. The writers neither discussed the topics nor provided different perspectives. These paragraphs are like a list of definitions and summaries. Despite synthesizing information from different sources, the author neither connected the relevant pieces of information nor provided specific examples of these strategies and how they could maximize learning, leaving that to the reader.

1. Discussion

The samples of students’ writing show that undergraduate and postgraduate students face many obstacles in writing RAs and RPs in terms of developing arguments and discussing the claims and contributions of other researchers as they relate to their own research topic. Stating their positions and finding their authorial voice also present problems. They struggle when paraphrasing information from other sources, analyzing the work of others, and synthesizing relevant discussions from different sources. Not to mention linking their research studies with others’ and stating their voice. Inconsistency in writing the list of references was also evident in their papers. Besides these difficulties, postgraduate students cannot formulate research questions and hypotheses.

Plagiarism was obvious in their writing. Many of them resorted to plagiarism since they struggled in paraphrasing information written by others in English. They resort to plagiarism since the whole concept of writing a research paper is new to them. High school or college did not prepare them to do so. They are unfamiliar with the process, including citing rules, referencing skills, and processing information from different sources. My observations are supported by the discussions of several scholars (Casanave, 2012; Pecorari & Petric’, 2014; Pecorari, 2003; Petric’ 2004; Flowerdrew & Li, 2007; Sherman, 1992). These difficulties could also be attributed to the influence of their culture (Al-Zubaidi, 2012) and previous educational experiences, which focus more on memorizing information than criticizing arguments or asking questions.

The above scripts show inconsistency in providing integral and non-integral citations. The last name of the cited author was mentioned, sometimes following the guidelines, and at other times either the first name or its initial was included, which is incorrect. In some cases, the year of publication did not follow the author’s last name. In other cases, page numbers were not included. Some writers included the references after the full stop indicating the end of sentences.

To develop an argument, writers are expected to use different sources, paraphrase the relevant discussions and synthesize them. My analysis of the students’ work indicates that, in contrast, they tend to rely on one or two sources for developing an argument, which reduces the academic quality of their papers.

Students are inconsistent in attributing the sources systematically, following the guidelines mentioned in academic writing manuals and by Hyland (2000), which require writers to paraphrase relevant information from sources or quote directly from the text using quotation marks and exemplify them. Most undergraduate and graduate students tend to plagiarize more than paraphrase. In addition, the more advanced learners use patchwriting more than paraphrasing. The theoretical sections in the RAs looked like a list of points rather than a development of arguments and discussions of researched topics. The writers rarely used exemplifications like “f*or example, as this example shows*…etc.,” indicated further reference like “*see…for further explanation*”, or for further analysis, “*I will rely on…for further analysis*”. Expressing evaluation of others’ work mentioning strengths and weaknesses, and expressing criticism almost do not exist in their RPs. The former includes clauses like “*Although I consider…*, *I think…*,” and the latter includes “*The main shortcoming…*”. The difficulties in attributing sources correlate to some extent with the results of Lee’s (2019) research, which shows that more skilled writers included a balanced integration of authors’ voices and sources’ attribution. In contrast, less skilled writers provided too much or too little attribution, exhibiting a lack of awareness of how to attribute and retain an authorial voice.

The students’ scripts did not include their positions as authors. Such difficulty among non-native speakers (NNS) of English was mentioned by (Hyland & Milton, 1997; Hyland, 2001; Paltridge & Starfield, 2007), specifically the four types of stance markers: self-mentions, attitude markers, boosters, and hedges. While the first marker refers to the use of personal pronouns *I* and *we*, the second attitude marker expresses writers’ attitudes in terms of agreeing or disagreeing with the cited author, like *definitely* or *unfortunately*. Writers use boosters like *obviously* and *highly* to confirm an attitude and hedges like *more likely*, *may*, and *might* to present an opinion.

It could be concluded that Palestinian Arab EFL students in Israel struggle to write RPs much like other international students pursuing their degrees in English-speaking countries and their own countries. The problems are concentrated in the area of following writing conventions and guidelines in terms of paraphrasing, summarizing, synthesizing, citing, and writing references (Al-Zubaidi, 2012) or references (Al-Khasawneh & Maher, 2010; Al-Zubaidi, 2012; Rabab’ah & Al-Marshadi, 2013; Alfakih, 2017). They lack the necessary language proficiency skills as well as the academic skills to conduct research. In addition, the discussed problems above do not differ from those mentioned by Altikriti (2022), who investigated problems facing undergraduate Jordanian students, Qasem & Zayid (2019) (Yemeni students), and Alfakih (2017) (Saudi postgraduate students) showed that Arab students lacked the pre-requisite academic skills for writing an RP, including the necessary knowledge of research paper writing process, sources, and methodology.

1. Conclusion

This chapter discusses the challenges facing Arab EFL students, undergraduate and postgraduate, when writing their research papers in English. Analysis of students’ samples shows they encounter many difficulties writing a RA or RP. They lack a deep understanding of the process itself. Besides problems in paraphrasing, summarizing, and synthesizing information from different sources acknowledging other researchers and scholars, and difficulty including their voices, they are unfamiliar with citation rules and writing reference lists. Postgraduate students are not able to formulate research questions or a hypothesis.

Plagiarism poses another serious problem. While most of them, especially those who pursue their bachelor’s degrees, plagiarize, others who demonstrate better English proficiency use patchwriting. They are not fully aware of the process itself. In addition, they lack the necessary skills of integral and non-integral citation, referencing using reporting verbs, and including a list of sources at the end of the paper.

It could be concluded that Palestinian Arab EFL undergraduate students lack the academic skills to develop academic arguments, support them, include their voices, express authorship, and relate them to their research. Similarly, graduate students are unaware of the research process, the importance of formulating a research question, adopting methodology, reviewing the literature, reporting results, and relating them to previous research. Therefore, EFL programs should revise their curricula to include courses to train students to write RAs and RPs.

Chapter 7

Cultural Transfer

1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the influence of Islam as the religion of Arabic EFL students and their first culture. I begin by discussing the relationship between language and culture, indicating the importance of considering culture as a factor that affects learning and teaching writing in English as an additional language. I then discuss the influence of Islam, as the religion of the students in question, and the Arabic language. A discussion of the transference of prior learning experiences when writing in English on the part of the students follows. Later, errors that stem from Islam, Arabic culture, and prior learning experiences are analyzed and categorized. Each category includes examples of errors taken from student samples.

The relationship between language and culture

Language reflects the culture of its speakers in terms of beliefs, customs, historical and cultural background, as well as their lifestyle and way of thinking. It also reflects the social changes in the same culture. Since language and culture are inseparable, learning to communicate in a new language requires an awareness of how the culture interrelates with language whenever it is used (Scarino & Liddicoat, 2013). However, knowledge of culture is often neglected in language learning and teaching (Abu Rass, 2011; Al-Khatib, 2017; Jiang, 2010; Ye, 2013).

Since languages have different cultural traits and standards, learning another language requires adequate knowledge of the cultural patterns and modes of thinking of its speakers to communicate well with native speakers and to express them appropriately in the target language. A lack of knowledge of cultural features will result in bad communication and many mistakes. Kaplan (1966) was among the first researchers who addressed cultural influence on second language learning. He compared English rhetoric with that of some other languages and analyzed paragraphs written by native speakers of Arabic, Korean, Russian, and Spanish learners of English. He mentioned that this comparison was not a criticism of the rhetoric of other languages but to indicate the importance of acquainting English teachers and instructors with differences in paragraph development and structure in English and the learners’ first languages. He stated, “Rhetoric, then, is not universal either, but varies from culture to culture and even from time to time within a given culture. It is affected by canons of taste within a given culture at a given time” (p.2). Every culture has specific conventions that are different from those of other cultures. In order to achieve cross-cultural communication and avoid miscommunication, writing teachers should understand the composition conventions of different cultures (El-daly, 2012) because cultural conventions “dictate the choice of linguistic and structural aspects of discourse” (Purves, 1988, p.5).

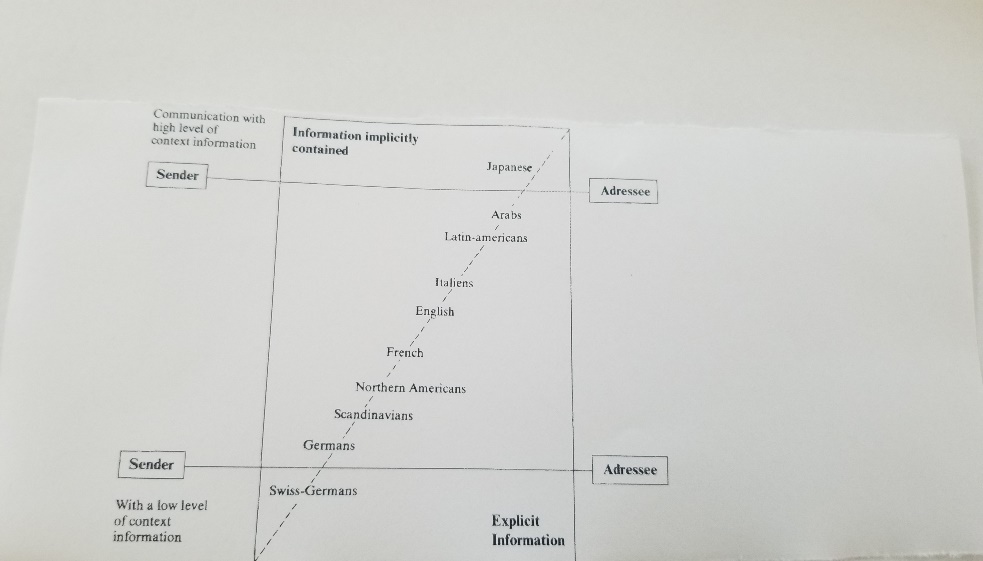


Figure 1 Diagram of cross-cultural differences in paragraph organization (adapted from Kaplan 1966).

Hall (1966, 1976, 1983) discusses three interrelated dimensions of culture: time, space, and context, assuming that monochromic cultures are low-context, and their members need information; in contrast, polychromic cultures are high-context, and their members are preprogrammed to a large extent, creating culture-specific context. Zahrana (1995) examined how the American culture and the Arab culture view the role of language, the structure of persuasive messages, and communicating effectively with their audiences, attributing the distinctions to cultural, historical, and social factors, labeling the American culture as high-context (HC) and the Arabic culture as low-context (LC). According to Hall (1976), “HC transactions feature pre-programmed information that is in the receiver and in the setting, with only minimal information in the transmitted message. LC transactions are the reverse” (p. 101). Members of different cultures might perceive similar messages differently. Following Hall’s (1976) discussion, the meaning in high-context cultures is implicit in the context, and it is the reader’s responsibility to figure out the writer’s intentions and messages.

Recently, cultural differences as a cause for negative transfer have caught the attention of some researchers from different countries. They have started researching this area, attributing the causes for transfer-related errors to different thinking modes (Bai & Qin, 2018; Jiang, 2010; Zhou, 2016) and religious beliefs (Abu Rass, 2011; Al-Khatib, 1994; Qaddumi, 1995; Bai & Qin, 2018). Transferring the cultural modes and patterns of the learners’ culture is another issue that has been addressed in learning a second language, and it started to gain more momentum lately. Ye (2013) surveyed 200 English compositions and found that 73% of the mistakes in the students’ compositions were linked to the influence of their native culture. Ye (2013) divided the mistakes caused by the influence of the mother culture into four categories: poor diction; Chinese thinking patterns; the mixture of sentence structures; incoherence in statements.

In another study, Bennui (2008) employed the contrastive analysis approach to investigate the influence of Thai rhetorical, stylistic, and cultural writing patterns on the organization of the 28 third-year English-minor Thai students’ written paragraphs and discourse in English. At the discourse level, Thai students tend to use repetitions, extensive use of lists, no use of conclusions, and a personal style. The results also show that Thai students tend to use features of the Thai style of writing, such as wordiness or redundancy style of Thai writing.

Human values are generally defined as people’s main beliefs to determine right or wrong, good or bad, and fair or unfair in different situations in varying cultures, societies, and religions (Baba, 2011). Historical developments of countries and societies affect their values, beliefs, and attitudes. For example, since Chinese people tend to be superstitious and have been controlled by Confucian idealism, they still look at authority as sacred and emphasize self-control, which is contrary to Western societies that emphasize individualism and personal freedom. While holisticism and synthesis are forms of Chinese thinking patterns, logic and rationality characterize the Western way of thinking (Bai & Qin, 2018). In addition, the “Chinese thought pattern is imaginative, subjective, synthetic, group-oriented, concrete, non-systematic and cyclical; Western thought pattern is abstract, objective, analytic, egocentric, conceptualized, systematic, and linear” (Zhou, 2016, p. 1877). The ties among the group members in collective societies are strong, while in societies that value individualism and personal freedom, the ties between individuals are loose (Hofsted, 2005). In addition, the former emphasizes group goals and the latter personal goals. The Chinese thinking pattern is circular, while Westerners are straightforward (Zhou, 2016) and direct (Ye, 2013). As a result, Chinese students who write English compositions fail to put the main point at the beginning and support it with details (Ye, 2013). They employ indirect ways of expressing their ideas in writing, paying little attention to logical reasoning. While English writing “prefers deduction and places emphasis on originality and personalization” (Ye, 2013, p.37), with the writer presenting their ideas using their own words, Chinese writers tend to generalize and present the main idea at the end of their writing. Since Chinese writers are not familiar with the English features of writing and the differences between English and Chinese, they do not pay enough attention to the organization of their writing in English, which might sound illogical, confusing, and unnatural (Houston, 1994). In contrast, English writing accents logical reasoning, clear organization, coherence, and unity (Ye, 2013).

For example, Liu (2008) examined the effect of L1 on the English writing of Chinese students as an L2 from three perspectives: traditions of Chinese and English writing, language switches in the writing process, and language transfer. The effect of Chinese traditions appears in the form of rhetorical indirectness, which maintains harmony and avoids impoliteness. As a result, the writing of Chinese students “appears vague and indirect to create solidarity between the speaker and the hearer” (Liu, 2008, p. 50). Like other writers of English from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, Chinese messages are implicit (Ye, 2013), and they are usually left “to readers to interpret the content, understand the deeper meanings and appreciate the artistic beauty” of the compositions (Timina, 2013, p.3). In addition, the level of creativity of Chinese students in English is limited since they borrow the ideas of others from textbooks. Moreover, they rarely express their opinions in their compositions (Smerdov, 2011). According to Chen (2006) (as cited in Timina, 2013), Chinese students tend to use proverbs, maxims, and fixed expressions in their writing; in contrast, English writers use their own ideas, words, and expressions. Since they cannot avoid transferring their modes of thinking and reasoning, the compositions of Chinese students are very often Chinese-style (Ye, 2013).

El-daly (2012) conducted a study to understand how Arabic and Spanish speakers narrate in English and the effect of their first cultures on their narration. The subjects were ten graduate students from two linguistic and cultural backgrounds: Arabic and Spanish, who were graduate students in different majors at the University of Pittsburg. The researcher asked them to write a narration in English and interviewed them individually. The questions required them to describe how they approached the narration, started the essay, developed their ideas, and ended the essays, and if their first culture affected their narrations. Data analysis shows that the students were aware of the influence of their L1 in their writing. For example, one subject said that his language added “beauty” to his narration; therefore, he used certain expressions that may sound good, although it might be at the expense of the meaning. Another subject mentioned that he repeated some structures and sentences because he inherited this habit from writing in Arabic. He added that despite being in the US for an extended period, he still thought in Arabic and translated into English.

However, one subject rejected the idea of first language and culture transfer in his narration in English. The Spanish subjects’ explanations did not have a common ground and expressed different opinions. For instance, while Spanish subject one stated that Spanish and American cultures are similar, subject two said the opposite. The former indicated that the effect of her native culture was manifested in her choice of topics that represented the emotional side of her personality. The latter denied any effect of his first language on his narration since her wrote about something personal and wrote what he remembered. While subject three completely rejected the idea of first language interference, subject four indicated the effect of her culture specifically in choosing her story, but she tried not to sound like a Spanish speaker. The researcher explained the Spanish-speaking subjects’ responses as a way not to reveal their identities as Hispanic, unlike the Arab subjects who used their first language and cultural modes of thinking intentionally.

Like other EFL learners, Muslim Arab students’ culture and modes of thinking differ from those of the target culture. The cultural differences between the two language communities may account for some of the errors in academic writing in a foreign language. To be proficient writers in English, Arab EFL learners must adopt the English style by being acquainted with the culture, rhetoric, and linguistic structures of English (Al-Khatib, 2017). Cultural differences between English and Arabic pose another challenge for Arab students writing in English (Al-Khatib, 2017; Alkubaidi, 2019; Elachachi, 2015; Kaplan, 1966; Koch, 1983; Zaharna, 1995).

Kaplan’s research on contrastive rhetoric in 1966 showed that Arab students transfer features of Arabic and cultural patterns. Later, Ostler (1987) reached the same conclusion, claiming that EFL Arabic-speaking students may fully command English grammatical patterns and idioms, but their essays still sound foreign in English, and ESL teachers can identify their essays despite that they do not include grammatical mistakes. He also attributes the results to sociocultural factors, mainly the influence of classical Arabic, the language of the Qur’an, the holy book of Muslims. Arabs believe that the Qur’an “was made to Muhammed exclusively in Arabic directly from God through the intermediary archangel Gabriel (Kaplan, 1967, p. 11), which was transcribed into a written format (Al-Qathani, 2006). Arabic writers may adopt its stylistics, refusing to develop characteristics of other forms of literature in their writing, either in their first language or second (Ostler, 1987). However, Ayish (2003) challenges the dichotomy in perceiving the Arab Muslim culture, claiming that Arab-Islamic sociocultural traditions derive from secular and religious sources. The former refers to the pre-Islamic era or the interaction with foreign cultures by Arab Muslims, and the latter stems from God and the Sunna, which includes the sayings and practices of Prophet Muhammad. It could be concluded that a new group of scholars in the Arab world call for looking at the Arabic culture not as a single culture but as a diverse one (Zahrana, 2009). Despite the controversy regarding the influence of Islam on Arabic culture, it can be seen that some of the challenges of Arab students writing in academic English can be attributed to the influence of Islam and other cultural factors. Religious and cultural transfer is likely to happen when students learn to write in English as a second or foreign language because their first culture influences their behavior. Their first culture saturates the L2 writing experience and influences their product.

1. Influence of Islam as the Students’ Main Religion

Religious beliefs could be another reason for cultural transfer and a cause of students’ English writing mistakes. Arabic culture is highly influenced by Islam, which is based on the main principle of unity of belief in God and the Prophet Muhammad (Abu Rass, 1994, 2011). Therefore, Arab students tend to use dichotomy: solutions to problems are black or white, right or wrong. In other words, there is no room for doubt or compromise. Questioning the norms or the ultimate truth is rare in Arabic culture.

Arab learners of English transfer not only the Arabic literary style in their writing but also their religious beliefs and culture (Abu Rass, 2011; Qaddumi, 1995). For example, the unity of belief in God is unquestionable. Al-Khatib (1994) cites Abdulati (1975), who claims that “the authenticity of the Qur’an for Moslems is beyond doubt” (p. 12). Muslims usually accept principles covered in the Qur’an as Divine truth and reject others that differ from the Qur’anic principles and teachings, which embrace all aspects of life. Feghali (1997) cites Glisenan (1983), who claims that swearing oaths on the Qur’an and the Prophet Muhammad are part of the Arabic discourse. “Belief in God has direct and ultimate control of all that happens” (Nydell, 1987, p. 34). In other words, there is no room for doubt or compromise. Questioning the norms or the ultimate truth is rare in Arabic culture. The writer assumes that the reader agrees with him because of cultural consensus. In addition, they tend towards conformity and conservatism, complying with the spirit and morality of society. This is reflected in Arab students’ writing, which lacks any room for doubt (Derrick & Gmuca, 1985), expecting readers to agree with them on what they write.

Qaddumi (1995) illustrates the manifestation of religious beliefs on hospitality, making deals, and contracts by offering drinks such as coffee and tea without asking the guests and assuming that guests will accept without hesitation. Such interaction is carried out under the assumption that God has dictated it and requires no explanation. These types of interaction show that Muslim Arab learners of English seem to draw on cultural beliefs in their writing (Abu Rass, 2011; Qaddumi, 1995). In addition, when Muslim Arabs make appointments or contracts, they usually say “Insha Allah,” which means “God willing”. Only God knows the future and is the only one who will determine whether the contract or deal will be carried out. Similarly, the name of God is often placed at the top of pieces of writing, thus attributing everything to God’s will (Al-Khatib, 2001).

To support their arguments, Arab students often quote verses from the Qur’an, the holy book, the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (Ahadeeth), and declarations by prominent leaders or Islamic scholars (Abu Rass, 1994). “Repeated words, phrases and rhythms move others to belief, rather than the ‘quasilogical’ style of Western logic, where interlocutors use ideas to persuade” (Feghali, 1997, p.361). Johnstone (1989) suggests that persuasion is most often employed in cultural settings “in which religion is central, settings in which truth is brought to light rather than created out of human rationality” (p. 151). Therefore, Arabic-speaking students of English tend to copy verses from the Qur’an as a text given by God, to convince their readers because they believe that the text is infallible in content and literary style. As a result of following the style of the Qur’an, presenting different perspectives for argumentation does not exist in Arabic prose. Students are not expected to challenge what is socially validated, especially if it is mentioned in the Qur’an. For example, male and female segregation should not be questioned because it is mentioned explicitly in the Qur’an.

Religious interference also occurs at higher levels. For instance, Al-Qahtani (2006) analyzed research article introductions written by Arab scholars and those by native speakers of American English using the CARS model (Create a Research Space). He found cultural and religious influences on the Arab authors’ introductions that neither reflect the CARS model principles nor the topic discussed in the article. They include Islamic opening statements used in different contexts and discourses, such as delivering formal speeches, writing letters, and expressing acknowledgments. In addition, using the Holy Qur’an and the Prophet, including the phrase “peace be upon him” in the text, is common. Moreover, they express acknowledgments and prayers for those who helped them at the end of the introduction.

Repetition is a major feature of Arabic (Koch, 1983; Johnstone, 1989, 1991) that is considered a tool to reinforce one’s thoughts (Lahlali, 2012) and a persuasive tool that has an emotional impact on the reader (Koch, 1983; Lahali, 2012). Arab students tend to use presentation and repetition as they are rhetorical patterns common in Arabic for persuasion (Johnstone, 1991). Presentation is used when the truth is available, followed by repetition, repeating the same thing many times. However, they need to provide proof when there is doubt about the truth. Arabic speakers argue by “repeating arguments, paraphrasing them, and doubling them” (Koch, 1983, p.500).

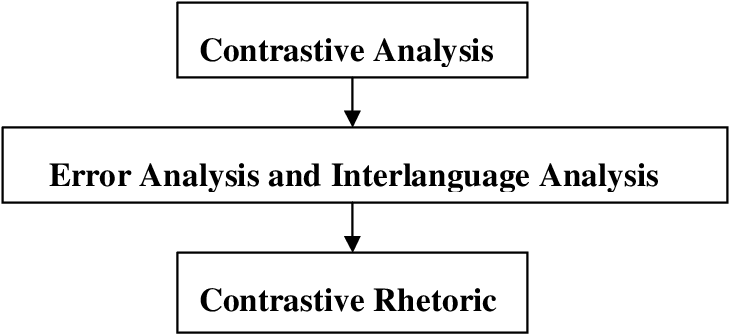


Figure 2 The Relationship among the approaches used in studies on L1 interference (Bennui, 2008, p.75)

Johnstone (1989) justifies her argument with cultural traits, claiming that such rhetoric is dominant in hierarchical societies, where religion is dominant, and truths are collective rather than individual matters, like in Arab societies. She further argues that truth in such cultures is not developed by human rationality but is brought to light by saying and repeating things like missionaries.

1. Influence of Arabic Culture

As early as 1966, Kaplan conducted his seminal research as the field of contrastive rhetoric developed and investigated the influence of L1 on L2 writing, indicating that “Rhetoric . . . is not universal . . ., but varies from culture to culture…” (p. 2). Cultural differences between English and Arabic pose another challenge for Arab students writing in English (Elachachi, 2015; Kaplan, 2001, 2017).

The argument of Almuhailib (2019) regarding Arabic prose in the pre-Islamic and Islamic eras contradict the claims of Sai’adeddin (1989) as well as Shaikhulislami and Makhlouf (2000). He claims that poetry was a dominant rhetoric of Arabic in the pre-Islamic era, and it was replaced by the Qur’an, the holy book of Muslims, when the Islamic era started. Since Arabs maintained a nomadic lifestyle at the time, Arabic written rhetoric was not developed. Koch (1983) added that oral characteristics had influenced Arab written rhetoric. Culture has a strong influence on students’ knowledge and style of writing (Hyland, 2003), and even on choosing a topic for writing in English (Almuhailib, 2019). According to Shukri (2014), family and religious topics in Saudi Arabian class discussions might be taboo. In this regard, he reported that Saudi students refused to speak about certain topics from Western culture due to their loyalty to Islam. They also viewed Western ideas about open-mindedness and freedom of speech negatively. Therefore, teachers should be aware of the negative responses of students to topics that might cause a conflict with their cultural values (El-Araby, 1983). However, all cultures are evolving, and what was once taboo could now be an acceptable topic in Saudi Arabia. In addition, topics such as religion, politics, status, and sex would not be allowed in Saudi classes. Moreover, Saudi students interpret privacy differently.

Cultural contrasts between the Arabic-speaking and the English-speaking communities affect the rhetorical organization of texts as manifested by how cohesive devices are used Phillips (2017) (as cited in Al-Khatib, 2017). English-speaking communities tend to be more literate, individualistic, low contact, and writer-responsible. For these reasons, cohesion is text-based, specified, change-oriented, and non-additive, with repetition and exaggeration for persuasion being part of written products. In contrast, Arabic-speaking communities culturally tend to be more oral, collectivist, high-contact, and reader-responsible. For them, cohesion is context-based, generalized, repetition-oriented, and additive (Phillips, 2017).

Harfmann (2004) analyzed 20 school essays in Arabic and compared them to 20 essays in German, reporting similar results regarding Arab students’ writing which were attributed to the transferrence of oral features of Arabic. Arab applied linguists like Sai’adeddin (1989) and Shaikhulislami and Makhlouf (2000) also employed contrastive rhetoric, taking a defensive stance and even responding angrily to the claims of Western linguists regarding Arabic, claiming that the latter failed to understand the real reasons for oral features in written Arabic (Al-Qathani, 2006). For example, Sai’adeddin (1989) claimed that using oral features expresses a closeness and intimacy with the readers that the literate mode cannot. He also claims that the development of scientific and formal texts has been linear since the eleventh century. In addition, Shaikhulislami and Makhlouf (2000) refute the claims of Western applied linguists, claiming that Arab students’ writings were linear when they had enough time to write. Moreover, they blamed the audio-lingual language teaching method, which emphasizes oral skills and is still commonly used in the Arab world. It could be concluded that Arabic used to be like other oral languages that reflect traditional societies that use repetition, parallelism, and other linguistic features of oral societies. When the environment became rich in print, and the population became more literate in the 20th century, these oral features receded.

Another potential cultural factor in the writing of Arabic-speaking students is the upbringing of children in many Arab families. Ahmed (2010) argues that Arab children in Egypt are expected to be passive watchers who are not allowed to argue with their teachers or negotiate meaning with them. Therefore, they are inhibited from including their voices or explaining things to readers when it comes to writing.

Arab culture adheres to and promotes collectivism rather than individualism (Abu-Saad et al., 2020; Feghali, 1997; Prowse & Goddard, 2010; Sagy et al., 2002; Smith, 2005; Zahrana, 1995). “The loyalty to one’s extended family and larger ‘in-group’ takes precedence over individual needs on goals” (Feghali, 1997, p. 352). Therefore, Arabic speakers are more group-oriented and tend to use pronouns that express collectiveness, such as *we* and *us*. However, Ayish (2003) challenges this dichotomy, claiming that individuality is expressed within the social group and emphasizing that there is a difference between individualism and individuality. Condon & Yousef (1975) add that individuality resists conformity and group pressure.

Smith (2005) conducted a study to examine the influence of audience and context on rhetorical choices by Arab and Chinese students who were required to write two letters: one addressed to a professor from their home country and the to an American professor. Results show that Arab students express solidarity using *we* and *their*, reflecting their group orientation and unity with their classmates. They also referred to God constantly. As one of the study participants stated, “In Arabic, you can relate everything back to God—In English you shouldn’t do that, but in Arabic, you can do anything” (Smith, 2005, p. 90). In addition, native speakers of English highly value individual achievements rather than kin relationships, family status, or affiliations (Zahrana, 1995).

Collective students’ orientation is in-line with other data from the Arab world (Prowse & Goddard, 2010) and Palestinian Arab students from Israel. Abu-Saad et al. (2020) found that junior Palestinian Arab teachers in Israel, similar to the subjects in this research and unlike their Jewish counterparts, value collectivism over individualism. Sagy et al. (2001) reported similar results among Palestinian Arab students, claiming that collectivism was most expressed through an “in-group-collectivist orientation” with “isolationism in values” (p. 25).

Culturally, Arab students rely heavily on personal relationships, negatively affecting their educational progress because they prefer spending time with family and friends rather than doing homework assignments. McKay (1992) reported similar observations regarding Saudi college students, and Prowse & Goddard (2010) about Qatari students. Such a preference is common in the Arab world, including among Palestinian Arabs in Israel.

Anglo-American academic writing is expected to be explicit and direct (Hinkel, 1997), and linear (Gillet, 2015); however, based on the views of other researchers and educators, indirectness is a feature of the writing of people who have been raised in Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist societies. Hinkel (1997) concluded that Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Indonesian students “utilized rhetorical questions and tags, disclaimers and denials, vagueness and ambiguity, repetition, several types of hedges, ambiguous pronouns, and the passive voice in greater frequencies than NSs did” (Hinkel, 1997, p. 361). The four indirectness features and repeated patterns were subordination, vague determiners, delayed claims, and unnecessary use of adjectives. Other studies were conducted in different parts of the world examining indirectness in Spanish (Bennett & Muresan, 2016), Irani (Eslami, Shakir & Rakhshandehroo, 2018), and Costa Rican (Vargas Vásquez & Coudin, 2017), which found similar results.

Zahrana (1995) considers English-speaking societies as rich in print and “literate” while Arabic-speaking societies as “oral” (p. 244). It means that the former’s features are the following: directness, accuracy, and authenticity, and the latter’s characteristics are vagueness, emotionality, symbolism, and indirectness. Regarding the role of language in both communities, the former prefers legal documentation and record preservation, and the latter focuses on poetry, imagery, repetition, and exaggerations, which indicates that Arab writers prefer symbolism and emotional reasoning. Such a tendency makes their writing to be ornamental and intuitive. In addition, their use of rich and expressive language is another characteristic of elaboration among Arabic speakers (Feghali, 1997). Therefore, writing in English requires being accurate, concrete, and evidence-based. While native speakers of American English use the language for information transmission, Arabic-speaking people use the language to create social experiences.

Al-Khatib (2001) analyzed personal letters in English written by Arab Jordanian students, which showed that the students transferred the Arabic style of writing personal letters into English in terms of length and indirectness. He states, “The introductions are lengthy in terms of questioning (not concise) and are not to the point” (Al-Khatib, 2001, p. 188). In addition, they might include questions about the addressee’s health, personal life, and family. In contrast, British people do not include such questions in their personal letters. Al-Khatib (2001) concludes that the style of writing letters by these subjects is affected by their sociolinguistic backgrounds without considering the sociolinguistics of the addressee.

Al-Khatib (1994) claims that persuasion in Arabic is structural and rule-governed. It is based on three major modes: trustworthiness, argumentation, and appeal to emotions. These modes are based on reason and emotions. First, persuaders try to convince the audience by asserting their trustworthiness and reliability. Second, they attempt to persuade others by providing an argument and supporting it with convincing reasons. Third, persuaders may appeal to the audience emotionally. It is usually expressed through religion, religious devices, proverbs, and folk wisdom. Religious devices mean the use of some Qur’anic verses. The use of proverbs and wise sayings refers to the sayings and lines of the verse. The study of Al-Khatib (2001) about the effect of Arabic culture on Jordanian students writing personal letters in English reveals that these three modes work together.

Another influence on Arabic writers of English is the discourse style of Arabic, characterized by the “use of imagery, metaphors and simile in a beautiful clear manner,” with modern rhetoric in Arabic often more associated with literature and fiction than academic writing (Qaddumi, 1995, p. 158). Regarding Arab academic writing in English, early studies such as Kaplan (1966) observed that speakers of Arabic transfer rhetorical patterns from Arabic into their English writing.

Besides repetition, exaggeration and assertion are other two rhetorical patterns of the Arab communicative style. So Arabic speaking students tend to exaggerate and over assert things to be believed and understood (Al-Khatib, 2017) and avoid simplicity in writing since they consider it a feature of spoken discourse.

Eladani and Bedri (2017) examined problems facing Sudanese EFL students in writing in English, employing a descriptive analytical method. Data collection included administering a questionnaire to one hundred teachers of English and analyzing expository essays written by ninety Sudanese EFL students. Ninety-nine percent of the questionnaire respondents agreed that the writing difficulties of their students of English result from linguistic and cultural differences between English and Arabic. Results regarding cultural interference reveal that 85% of the students used unnecessary repetition in their English texts, (59%) used exaggeration, (57%) used embellishment, (45.4%) used simile, and (31%) used metonymy.

* 1. Prior Learning Experiences

Educational policies have rarely been considered one factor responsible for learning outcomes in general and the demonstration of writing skills in particular (Ezza, 2010). Such factors include the number of students in the classroom, the teacher-student ratio, the number of writing courses, course materials, and instruction, which are usually outdated.

Prior language learning experiences, as part of learning policies, could pose difficulties for Arab EFL learners to write better in English. For example, Al-Khuweileh and Al Shoumali (2000) conducted a research study investigating the relationship between poor writing in English and Arabic among 150 students at the Jordan University of Science and Technology. The results confirmed the common belief of having a strong association between the level of the students’ writing in their first language and the taught one. It means that poor writing in the mother tongue usually correlates with poor writing in the target language.

Previous learning experiences could also be considered an influential factor in the writing of Arab students in English. The inculcation method employed in Arab education, in general, is based on rote learning, repetition, and memorization (Al-Issa, 2005; Sonleitner & Khelifa, 2005). Other researchers who teach Arab postgraduate students in Malaysia, like Al-Zubaidi (2012) as well as Ibrahim and Nambiar (2011), made similar observations. Arab students in Israel are not an exception. They are also highly influenced by their prior educational experiences based on the transmission of material, memorization, copying, and rote learning (Abu Rass, 2011; Al-Haj, 1996; Eilam, 2002). Alkubaidi (2019) adds that Saudi learners are spoon-fed throughout their educational years, and they memorize writing passages to pass their English courses. Alkubaidi’s (2019) observations apply to most Arab students.

Therefore, Arab students are expected to make a shift from being passive learners to active ones, “from total reliance on the teacher to reliance on their own judgment, and from being a repository for rote-memorization of facts to being critical thinkers” (Suliman & Tadors, 2011, p. 402). In other words, they are expected to be able to negotiate meaning, make decisions, and rationalize their choices. Such skills would help them indirectly to explain themselves to readers when they produce texts in English.

Since pre-college educational environments are teacher-centered in this sector, the absolute authority is the teacher, who usually does not encourage students to express their opinions or ask questions (Al-Haj, 1996; Al-Issa, 2005; Eilam, 2002; Sonleitner & Khelifa, 2005). As a result, Arab Muslim students tend to prefer a control-oriented approach over adopting critical and reflective thinking (Al-Issa, 2005), which indirectly affects the clarity of their writing.

The research of Ahmed (2010) is relevant in this context. He examined EFL Egyptian students’ writing and attributed the challenges of sequencing ideas mainly to a lack of self-confidence and writing anxiety, citing the influence of the conservative approach to raising Arab children. He claims that Arab families usually marginalize the voice of their children, which implants a lack of confidence in putting forth opinions. Similarly, it has been found that pre-college Arab teachers, seen as absolute authorities, usually do not encourage students to express their opinions or ask questions (Al-Haj, 1996; Al-Issa, 2005; Eilam, 2002; Sonleitner & Khelifa, 2005). Moreover, Reid (1989) noted that Arabic speakers believe writing to be a skill “only the gifted possess” (p. 223), thus reserving its practice only to those who prove to have the “gift”. Such educational practices encourage a control-oriented approach over critical and reflective thinking (Al-Issa, 2005), often valued in English language writing educational contexts.

The literature reviewed above explores the influence of the first language and culture of Arab EFL learners in addition to their prior learning experiences. They negatively transfer their modes of thinking, native traditions, and values while learning English. The above-reviewed research shows that speakers of Arabic negatively transfer their modes of thinking, native traditions, and values in their English learning process. They also share the following common features of communicative style, which may conflict with other language styles: (a) unity of belief, (b) bi-polarity, (c) group orientation, (d) indirectness, (e) nonlinearity, (f) emotional appeal, (g), transmission of materials, (f) ornamental language, (g) repetition, and (h) exaggeration for the sake of persuasion. The following section includes an analysis of students’ samples of transferring Arabic features in their writing in English.

* 1. Unity of Belief

The following examples illustrate the category of unity of belief among Muslim students.

1. Reading Al-Quran is the most important habit in our daily life. One reason is that Reading this holy book provides a significant increase in the ability of the brain. In addition, it gives us hope and it builds connection with God. In fact, Al-Quran is a gift for all human kinds because of its wonderful benefits for them. Another reason for the importance of reading Al-Quran is that it is the key to Janna. Prophet Muhammad once said “Whoever reads the Ayat Alkursi at the end of each mandatory prayer, nothing prevents him from entering Paradise except death.” Finally, the most important reason for reading Al-Quran is that it is healing and mercy for all humanity; there is no physical, mental or spiritual illness or discomfort that Al-Quran can not cure. In addition, it helps people get rid of depression and anxiety. In conclusion, not only is reading Al-Quran essential for adults, it is also important for kids; the sooner they start, the better. In fact, Reading Al-Quran provides kids with deeper understanding of Islamic teaching which in turn guide their actions and decisions as they grow up. I recommend everyone to read this holy book to live in a smooth life.

2. Actually I always say that Beit Berl which chose me not me because I was accepted at Haifa University, but as I believe that everything happens to me it is the best thing from Allah. (God)

3. She wants to be “the best English teacher; “the friendly teacher”; she wants to be the closest friend; and “this college is the best one for me. “

The writer assumes that all Muslims are believers and share with her the same evaluation of the Qur’an’s positive effects as the holy book for Muslims. Her claims are supported neither by scientific evidence nor by specific examples. The use of superlatives in the third sample indicates a unity of belief, indicating that there is only one true path to becoming a successful teacher. In addition, it reflects exaggeration and assertion.

* 1. Binary Thinking

As a result of unity of belief, a dichotomy is set up in all aspects of life; things belong to one extreme or another. The following are examples of bi-polarity were taken from the first assignment (their expectations as freshmen at the college):

1. I chose beit-berl College because I believe that it can best train teachers to be professional and qualified enough to work at schools and deal with pupils. I heard a lot about the lecturers in the college and I was interesting to meet them and study with them. Besides, I heard that the teachers are so understanding and considerate. They are always ready to help their student and encourage them to excel. Moreover, I like the environment in the college. It is so nice and quiet. I think it’s the perfect place to study in. The buildings are so clean. I was also so interesting of the library in Beit Berl. It’s one of the biggest libraries in Israel. It’s a great place to look for resources and books. It’s also a great place to study in.

2. The most important reason is that any one in this world is ambitious for having peace. However, having a personal weapon destroys this comprehensive faith and contributes of making bad phenomena such as violent, murder etc.

3. The third reason was that I didn’t make any shopping during the break, which is a disaster for me especially that I have my mother’s credit card, that I can shop freely.

4. He is my first and last love.

5. For example, I would like to learn how to write without making any mistakes.

6. We as English teachers must to learn and master everything about English such as the writing and reading, so we can benefit our students.

7. I think that Salma, a teacher in my school, is the most pessimist person in the world.

8. Second, in my perspective teaching is the perfect job for a woman.

The choice of vocabulary in the above examples reflects the students’ tendency to use dichotomy and assertion in their writing. The words in bold, like “best, great place, destroy,” and superlatives as “the most pessimist,” show binary thinking in the writing of the Arab students. They demonstrate the students’ belief that there is one way only. They also show the tendency of exaggeration and assertion rather than simplicity.

* 1. Group Orientation

The following two examples from the first assignment reflect the tendency of collectivism rather than individualism:

1. The three main benefits of the computers are getting information, entertainment and communication. First of all the computers allow us to get information and news constantly, we can enter online, read the news and got the information that we need.

The next benefit is the entertainment, we all have a spare time during the day, so we can spend some of it playing games on the computer .

The most important benefit is that we can keep in touch with the world; there is a lot of programs and websites like facebook and messenger, they allow us to communicate with different people from different origins and cultures. Using the computer helps me a lot in my daily life, it’s really a very good and benefit invention.

2. It is a tiny device, which enables us holding it every way.

3. I believe that watching movies really benefits us with many aspects of our lives.

4. We can find televisions these days almost in every home, and it has many advantages.

5. Watching movies has a lot of positive benefits on our life and mind, that’s not matter what movie’s genrar is drama, horror or tragedy.

6. We all agree that sometimes the government makes bad laws and policies.

7. My best friend told me that she want to study at Beit Berl and we always wanted to study together and to live this period of our life together, so this encouraged me to try to register to Beit Berl and if I have the luck they will accept me, I registered at 29-30 of June on the last time and I was always praying to success and to be accepted by them.

These examples show the collective mode of thinking among Arab students. They use the personal pronoun *we* to express a collective need, desire, or case. Phrases like “*we all share*” or “*we all agree*” reflect collective thinking. Although the first sample topic was about the advantages of computers, the writer expressed using collective pronouns like *we* and *us*. Only in conclusion does she mention the usefulness of computers for herself as an individual, stating *me* instead of *us*.

* 1. Indirectness

Indirectness is another feature of Arabic that is transferred in the writing of Arab students in English. The following examples show how students express themselves and their attitudes indirectly.

1. In fact, everyone has his own ambitions and dreams for the future.

2. There are many reasons why Tybee city is not the most peaceful place to live in it.

3. There are many reasons why reading is important.

4. I feel that I am proud of myself to do such a great hard work.

5. We all aware of the importance of social media sites in our daily lives and how they have side effects wither it negative or positive effects on us, even our lifestyle, feelings and emotions damage, and especially our actions, which can change from good to bad and perhaps the opposite, it depends on personality of the person himself.

6. Even though many students think that it is not crucial to take writing courses, since they might think that writing is an easy task to be done with only writing whatever they think of on a paper sheet, but the truth it is not.

7. And when someone decide to learn a new language he start by learning the alpha pet of the language and how to write them then he began to write those alphas’ in order to write a word then step by step he become able to put sentences together then he can read those sentences and write paragraphs.

The above examples show the tendency of indirect writing, going around the topic rather than introducing it directly.

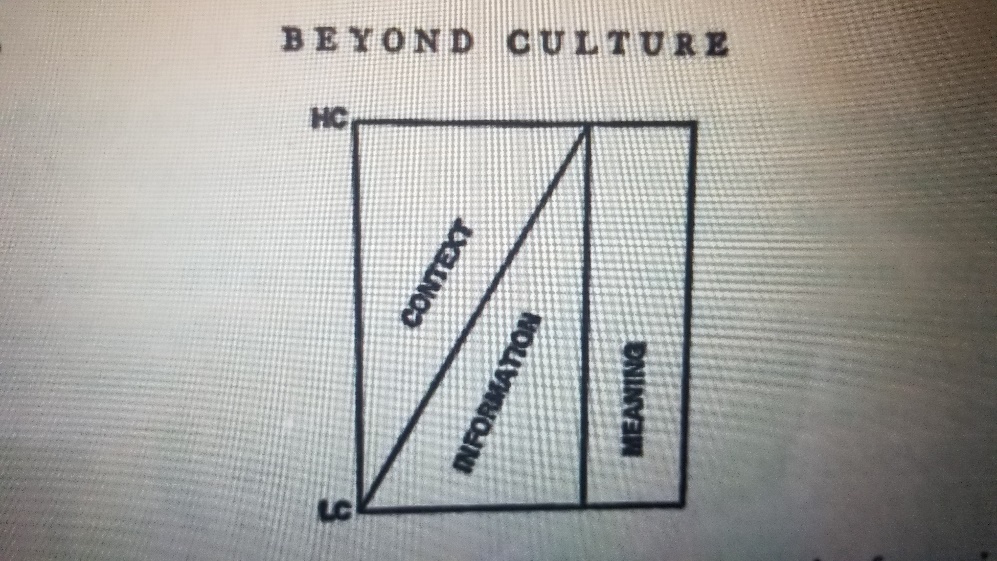


Figure 3 Source: *Beyond culture*, Hall (1976, p. 102)

* 1. Nonlinearity

The following examples show a non-linear style of writing. The subjects wrote around the topic using the style of Arabic, including a series of clauses and phrases.

1. People started to prevent their children from using the Internet at a young age for their own protection and so they won’t be exposed to things that the parents don’t know about but there’s other ways to solve this problem, one benefit of having everything in the internet is that you can jam the inappropriate sites from the children and in this way the parents don’t have to prevent internet use in the house and they don’t have to keep an eye on the child all the time.

2. I’m really thrilled to learn how to be a good teacher for the future, for making new friendships that last for life time and to have fun while doing it all but on the other side I’m a bit stressed because it’s my first time experiencing the responsibility of studying for my future career, but for sure It will be an eye opining experience.

3. I been always in love with English language , from my childhood I was only watching English movies and lestining to an English songs, reding an English storie, so I diceded when I grow up I want to learn English and know much more about this subject, the times goes by very quickly and I graduated with great marks in English, so i signed up for bet berl college to be an English teacher so I want to share with you my experience and how I felt being a first year student.

The above examples show cultural preferences for writing around the topic.

* 1. Emotional Appeal

Some students systematically write “*under the name of God*” on the top of their written work. Others may start their quizzes and exams with “*God willing, God’s willing*,” or “*With the willing of God*”. However, in recent years such phrases do not appear as frequently in the students’ writing.

* 1. Transmission of Materials

Unity of belief explains Muslims’ tendency to follow their instructors and elders rather than construct knowledge from different materials and sources. They prefer receiving knowledge and advice from their teachers, parents, and adults. For example, they are highly influenced by their parents and friends.

1. I started learning in beit berl for many reasons, my parents and references advised me to learn there because of the high education in English section, and that its near to my town which makes it easier for transportation.

2. “You won’t be able to wake up every morning at 6pm”,

“It’s far away from our hometown, it takes 2 to 3 hours in the bus”,

that’s how my parents tried to convince me to study at Al-Qasemi college and to stop thinking about Beit Berl college. But the voices in my head pointed at Beit Berl, since my friends who study there have been always telling me that English at their college is special and different and they actually enjoyed studying there, even though they faced some difficulties in the beginning but they have the courage to get over them and they hosted help and understanding teachers . But those who study English at Al-Qasemi college for example, some of them kept complaining and some moved to other subject. And the funny thing , that my mom also studied there Haha she couldn’t deny how good is the college and to me all the stuffs that they talked about were like an obstacles that I have to get through them and to prove that I can win this challenge.

I visited more than one college, but I found Beit Berl college is the most appropriate one for me.

3. The first person that gave me the idea to join Beit Berl is my father, he told me that it is the most appropriate place for being a teacher. So I started checking their website, asking people who learned there how the atmosphere is and so on....

Well after all checking I liked the place generally, and because when I ask someone had an extra experience than me he told to join Beit Berl because it’s the right place for teachers, so I applied for enrollment to the college and I got accepted and here I am.

4. After I graduated high school I prepared a list of all the universities and colleges that I wanted to apply to, and choosing Beit Berl wasn’t an easy decision to make. But the good reputation that Beiet Berl has effected me a lot, the conditions were reasonable, and most importantly I spoke to previous student of the college which they encouraged me to take this step

5. I feel comfortable here much than other educational institutions and the teachers here with high educational degrees which means that they will give us their best and through their experiences we will learn and reach high levels.

6. However, if you like watching TV, I advise you to reduce it as much as you can.

These examples show the way of thinking of Arab students who believe in being receptive rather than constructive. They also reflect the influence of parents and friends on the students’ crucial choice of their future profession. Most of them choose the teaching profession to satisfy their parents’ wishes. They also feel the need to consult with their friends, which indicates the importance of social relations. In addition, by using “*I advise you*” instead of “*I recommend you*,” the writer felt close enough to the audience to express her advice, reflecting her cultural mode of thinking about closeness.

* 1. Ornamental Language

The following samples reflect the tendency to use ornamental or embellished language to express their attitudes and persuasion.

1. I hope that this fabulous course stays as we used to and…

2. So I decided to learn English to help my community to rise up, and to respect this beautiful language

3. for example, having a teacher from Chicago is a fabulous thing,

4. fortunately we will obtain a lot of benefits, like catching the accent and the beautiful correct English.

5. I wish myself and my colleges success and a joyful year

* 1. Repetition and Exaggeration for the Sake of Persuasion

Arab students tend to write long and expanded English sentences with repetition of content and form. In Arabic, repeating ideas and phrases is used for persuasion. Repetition is presented by writing more synonyms in the same sentence to convey emphasis. For example, the following paragraphs show fewer language problems, but they include a great deal of first cultural transfer in terms of repetition and exaggeration.

Moving to another country

1. There are many marvelous places on this earth, and I would like to move to another country someday. If I have the opportunity to settle down somewhere in this world I will travel to Australia and stay there forever for the following reasons.

First of all, the weather is mostly sunny, and I enjoy sunny days and the sunshine of summer. Also, the fresh air which makes Australia has one of the lowest air pollution in the world. Second, making a new start for myself and explore the country, by getting a job and build connections and communicate with foreign people I have never dealt with before. Third, the beautiful and large varieties of landscapes are what make Australia unique in my eyes. This is the reason I love visiting the country, not to mention living there. Last and most important reason, get to know myself better and become independent because everything is new and unfamiliar. When I live in a new country, I have the freedom to discover who I am and what my purpose in life especially when I have to observe a lot of things and different perspectives in other culture; the people attitudes and behaviors. The adventures and the experiences that I am going to face will absolutely make me stronger and open minded and I will become a self-reliant because nobody will be there for me. I can imagine how my life will be awesome if this opportunity become true.

Cup of Coffee

2. I love drinking coffee each and every day without exceptions for many reasons. First of all, drinking coffee in the early morning helps me forget all of my concerns and worries, thus grants me the pleasure of enjoying each moment of the day to the fullest.

Secondly, coffee strengthens the bond between my father and I. Both he and I enjoy drinking coffee a lot, and so every now and then we would have a conversation over a cup of coffee at the cafe across from our house.

The most significant reason as to why I love coffee is because it gives me a boost of energy that any other energy drink can’t provide. I read about its benefits on the internet and it is known to be a great provider of energy. Therefore, I like having a cup of coffee whenever I’m sleepy or tired and have something important to do like doing assignments or studying.

Travelling around the world

3. Traveling around the world is my favorite; I really enjoy traveling inside the country and around the world. There are some reasons make me enthusiastic about traveling around the world.

First, traveling around the world makes me feel more comfortable and helps me to forget all my worries. Specifically, after I’m having a hard time or hard work.

Second, I like traveling around the world especially to islands, because I like the natural views and the quiet atmosphere there, and all of these things can help me to relax and feel good. Two years ago I was in Thailand and I had a great time there. In addition, I realized that the climate in Thailand is different than here and this was new information for me.

The last reason that makes me enjoy traveling around the world is getting to know new cultures and to increase my knowledge and my information about the world. For instance, in Japan they have a special way to greet each other and it is a strange way for me, because we are greeting each other by handshake and they are greeting each other by bending.

To sum up, traveling around the world is important to communicate with new people, to hear new languages, and to increase our information about the world.

4. I choose to be English teacher for many reasons. First, I love English so much I think I am so good at English so I decided to do something with it and the best job for me was English teacher.

5. In conclusion, choose people who make feel happy and comfortable to be yourself with on trips.

6. a magical great place

1. Discussion

The analysis of the above mistakes shows the influence of the Islamic religion, Arabic culture, and prior learning experiences, which are based on coping strategies such as rote learning and memorization. Some of the included examples in this chapter are grammatically correct but are culturally inappropriate. The categories of such transfer include unity of belief, binary thinking, group orientation, indirectness, nonlinearity, emotional appeal, transmission of materials, ornamental language, repetition, and exaggeration for persuasion.

Although I classified the mistakes into different categories, some belong to more than two or three categories. For example, in the first category, unity of belief, the writer not only expressed her belief in the straight path of the holy book, the Qur’an, but she also used pronouns, words, and phrases that indicate her tendency of group orientation and being emotional. In other examples, group orientation, repetition, and nonlinearity appeared in one sentence.

The examples of religious transfer in terms of unity of belief are in line with the discussions of several scholars (Abdulati, 1975; Abu Rass, 1994, 2011; Feghali, 1997; Qaddumi, 1995), and the binary thinking examples correlate with Derrick and Gmuca (1985), and Kaplan (1966). In addition, the excessive use of the pronouns “we,” “us,” and phrases like “We all agree” reflecting group orientation support the arguments of many scholars such as Ayish (2013), Feghali (1997), and Smith (2005). These scholars claim that the tendency of Arab students to prefer collectivism rather than individualism stems from the Islamic religion and the Arabic culture, which also has a relationship with the transmission of materials. Arabs prefer receiving information and knowledge rather than constructing it like native speakers of English. The contributions of Ahmed (2010), Al-Haj (1996), Al-Issa (2005), Al-Zubaidi (2012), Eilam (2002), Ibrahim and Namibiar (2011) as well as Sonleiner & Khalifa (2005) regarding expecting students to be receptive because of the influence of prior educational experiences are relevant here.

Similarly, the students’ samples include many examples of indirectness and nonlinearity, which reflect first language and cultural interference. These examples show how the students go around the topic and try to approach it obliquely instead of stating it directly, as it is expected when writing in English. These results correlate with previous arguments by Al-Khatib (2001), Allen (1970 as cited in Sa’adeddin, 1989), and Zahrana (1995).

Emotional appeal is another category of first cultural transfer. In some samples, students used phrases like “*God’s will*” or “*with the help of God*,” showing their total reliance on God. These results are in line with the findings of Abu Rass (2011), Al-Khatib (2001), and Qaddumi (1995). Based on the analysis of the accumulated data for this research and my observations, fewer students have used such phrases in recent years.

Some scholars argue that Arab students use ornamental language (Kaplan, 1966; Qaddumi, 1995), repetition, and exaggeration (Al-Khatib, 2017; Koch, 1983) for persuasion. Data analysis includes students’ examples that fall into these categories, which indicate that Arab students tend to adopt the style of Arabic persuasion when they write in English.

1. Conclusion

This chapter shows the influence of the Islamic religion, Arabic culture, and prior experiences on the writing of Arab students in English, which poses another obstacle for these students in acquiring academic writing conventions in English. This is not to suggest that English is superior to Arabic. Arabic has an ancient literature and a deep culture. However, when students learn another language, they should express themselves in writing following the norms and conventions of the target language to communicate effectively with its native speakers.

Until recently, such interference was not considered influential in second/foreign language learning and teaching. This chapter shows that there is a need for greater attention to be paid to cultural aspects including modes of thinking and cultural patterns in learning to write well in English. Writing instructors should be aware of the students’ first language and culture to better understand mistakes that stem from the first culture and consider them in their instruction to help them write well in English. Students should also be aware of the effects of first language and culture transfer on their writing to understand such influences and avoid them when writing in English. Raising students’ awareness of the influence of their religion, first culture, and prior learning experiences is explained in detail in Chapter 8.

Chapter 8

Methods of Teaching and Evaluating Writing

1. Introduction

Previous chapters have focused on analyzing mistakes made by Palestinian Arab college students from Israel at different levels, from the sentence level to research papers. The focus of this chapter is on writing instruction and evaluation. I highlight the shortcomings of traditional teaching methods for improving college students’ writing in general, and in the case of Arabic-speaking students specifically, providing examples of effective methods of instruction that make a difference in students’ attitudes and performance, helping them overcome their English writing difficulties.

Classroom instruction plays an important role in dealing with errors. Over the history of English as a second/ foreign writing instruction, teachers have employed different approaches, methods, strategies, and techniques linked to different theories to help EFL learners write well in English. Many scholars attribute EFL college students’ difficulties to ineffective instruction in general (Chockwe, 2013; Young, 2010) and in the case of Arab EFL students specifically (Almari & Adawi, 2021; Alzamil, 2020; Anwar & Ahmed, 2016; Ezza, 2010). The discussion in Chapter 2 showed that the emphasis on writing instruction has, for many years, been on the product rather than the process. Therefore, writing instructors emphasized grammar and punctuation rather than communicative and genre-related aspects of writing (Alkubaidi, 2019).

The content of Chapter 7 shows how cultural differences between English and Arabic pose another challenge for Arab students writing in English, which was neglected for many years. To achieve cross-cultural competence, Jiang (2010) believes that the traditional teaching method teachers employ, which requires students to recite before the examinations, should be changed. In addition, since language and culture are inseparable and interdependent, cultural aspects should be considered in EFL programs, including differences in thinking patterns, urging them to use reasoning while writing in English (Ye, 2013). Insufficient training and knowledge might pose another obstacle for Arab-speaking writers to communicate effectively in English.

A historical review of teaching methods shows that in the 1960s, the product approach, also known as current-traditional rhetoric (CRT) in the literature, was dominant in writing programs and classes (Ezza, 2010). This writing theory differs from its predecessor, controlled composition, in that it considers writing at the discourse level, particularly emphasizing the paragraph and its components. The product approach was criticized in the 1980s since writing stages were not considered. While Freedman et al. (1983) described it as “pedagogically weak” (p. 181), Zamel (1983) claimed that the product approach was ‘‘prescriptive, formulaic, and overtly concerned with correctness” (p. 165). Krashen (1984) also harshly criticized the product approach, claiming that, even though the student-writer is “able to master all the rules of punctuation, spelling, grammar, and style that linguists have discovered and described,” they would never be competent in writing (p. 25).

Chokwe (2013) adds other factors that cause poor academic writing skills among students, such as the ineffectiveness of teaching writing at schools, socio-economic backgrounds, and insufficient reading. The transition from high school to college poses another difficulty to students (Yong, 2010) because there is a mismatch between the acquired L2 writing skills in high school and the required level in university courses (Mohammed & Alshenqeeti, 2020).

According to Brown (1994), teachers focus on the final piece of writing and measure it against the criteria of vocabulary use, grammatical use, and mechanical considerations such as spelling and punctuation. Al-Zubaidi (2012) adds to the literature the experience of international students in producing academic texts in English, including Arab students, in Malaysian universities that adopt English as a medium of instruction, claiming that their difficulties stem from their limited L2 proficiency, the influence of prior academic culture, and their mother tongue.

Dhanya & Alamelu (2019) conducted a study to investigate factors that influence the acquisition of writing skills; they asked the students about the problems they encountered in writing and factors that might positively impact their performance in writing. Three themes emerged from the analysis of students’ responses: lack of reading and writing practice (41.47%), lack of ideas (33.33%), and lack of self-confidence (12%). These results are in line with those of Yaakob (2014), who showed that some factors that hinder the development of writing skills include a lack of reading (50%), writing practice (33.33%), and teacher assistance (16.67%).

Investigating the challenges that Arab student teachers encounter in EFL writing in terms of employing appropriate teaching methods, sufficient teaching and time, and providing feedback has lately gained momentum in Saudi Arabia (Almari & Adawi, 2021). Results of research studies conducted by Anwar and Ahmed (2016), Gulzar et al. (2017), Ketabi (2015), and Tseng (2018) attributed the difficulties encountered by Saudi students to ineffective teaching methods and strategies, allocating insufficient time to error correction, and providing constructive feedback for students when they work individually or collaboratively in groups. Alzamil (2020) recommended revising the writing course materials and teaching methods to help Saudi students write better in English.

To help students deal with challenges and writing difficulties, Anwar & Ahmed (2016) highlight the significance of teaching methods and assessment, relating it to the strategies teachers employ. Others recommend employing different writing techniques of assessment, such as using dictation, having instructors provide corrections, providing feedback, self-correction, peer-editing, using journals, submitting portfolios (Gulzar et al., 2017; Ketabi, 2015; Sharma, 2019; Tseng, 2018), and using Writing Scoring Rubrics (WSRs) for creating effective correction criteria and practicing self-assessment before submitting the writing tasks (Larkin, 2015; Ningsih, 2016).

In addition, many learners think that the writing process causes anxiety, which urges many scholars and instructors to suggest practical treatments (Raja & Zahid, 2013) and adopt different strategies and techniques (Herdi, 2015; Gorospe & Rayton, 2022) such as working in groups and creating a community of learners, aiming to help their students overcome their writing anxiety. Writing learners do better when working collaboratively, especially in class (Dhanya & Alamelu, 2019). Other factors harm the fluency and accuracy of the students’ texts, such as social media, a lack of consistent feedback, learners’ inability to analyze and evaluate their work, and large classes where individuals hardly have their teachers’ attention (Pineteh, 2013).

In conclusion, classroom instruction plays an important role in dealing with errors. Therefore, there is a need to employ more effective and varied methods to help Arab EFL learners write well in English. The teachers are responsible for adopting, modifying, or developing remedial procedures and techniques to minimize the learners’ errors and elevate their level. Students should always be engaged and encouraged to do remedial exercises in order to improve their writing ability. Brief grammar rules may help students understand errors resulting from overgeneralization and incorrect parallelism mentioned in Chapter 2 (Al-Buainain, 2007). In addition, there is a need to address cultural differences between the L1 and L2 by contrasting texts, highlighting differences, and practicing writing.

1. Adopting the Process Approach

Due to the criticism of the product approach, there was a shift to the process approach. Unlike the product approach or the traditional approach, which deals with the production of parallel texts based on the models provided by the teacher, the process approach focuses mainly on planning and drafting with less emphasis on grammatical knowledge and text structure. Advocates of this approach consider writing an “explanatory and generative process in which writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning” (Zamel, 1983, p. 165). According to Raimes (1983), “composing means expressing ideas, conveying meaning; composing means thinking” (p. 216). As a result, accuracy is no longer the emphasis of writing instruction, and the main concern for classroom activities “would, therefore, be generating preliminary ideas, doing prewriting activities, outlining, getting started, producing first drafts, editing, revising, etc.” (Jordan, 1997, p.167). However, Alodwan and Ibnian (2014) claim that Arab students resist the planning stage. They are reluctant to engage in prewriting or planning activities, and most engage in drafting without a pre-designed outline. Even in exams, they tend not to use them unless the teacher obliges them.

The process approach emphasizes the writing process, not the product (Sun & Feng, 2009). In this approach, writers are trained to constantly ask themselves how to write and how to get the writing process started. Training should also include generating ideas for writing, thinking of the purpose and audience, and writing multiple drafts to present written products that express students’ own ideas. Teachers who use this approach give students time to develop ideas and get feedback on the content they write in their drafts because writing becomes a discovery process for them as they discover new ideas and new language forms to express them. Students should also be engaged in prewriting, planning, drafting, and post-writing activities and be given greater responsibility for their own learning through making decisions about genre and choice of topics as well as collaborating while writing.



Figure 4 The writing process as conceptualized by Venecia William (2020)

As the first stage of the writing process, prewriting precedes drafting, revising, editing, and publishing, including invention and arrangement activities (Mogahed, 2013). At this stage, writers may inquire, make an outline, explore ideas, brainstorm, write notes, or simply think about the topic (Williams, 2020). They also gather information and explore ideas through engagement with different prewriting experiences. While invention includes techniques for practicing prewriting activities such as brainstorming, freewriting, listing, clustering, interviewing, and looping, arrangement includes concept mapping and webbing. Starting the writing class with a free writing activity helps learners to think and explore new ideas (Darling, 2004). While clustering means associating ideas around a topic (Tomlinson, 1998), listing refers to putting ideas about a topic in a list and related ones in sub-lists (Mogahed, 2013). Interviewing is another prewriting activity that helps learners learn more about a topic. Looping as a free writing activity happens when the writer tries to discover a topic for writing by writing freely for five to ten minutes (Mogahed, 2013).

However, revising does not happen automatically. Alodwan and Ibnian (2014) argue that when revising, students astonishingly continue to pay more attention to surface errors until an advanced level (3rd year). They tend to focus on form in terms of grammar, spelling, and mechanics, neglecting content and never revising ideas, even when teachers do not stress language correctness.

Concept mapping and webbing are graphic organizers to organize content. While the former includes putting a circle around the main idea and using lines to connect it with the details, the latter means connecting words or phrases to a concept or a topic. For example, the teacher places a topic in the middle of the board or on the computer screen, and learners add words and phrases to connect them to the topic. It helps learners visualize the connection between ideas (Bada, 1996).

Composing is the second stage, which also includes drafting, which means students write the first draft, including the information gathered in the prewriting stage. Revising follows to include thinking about logically organizing the content. Williams (2020) encourages students to do that first, seeking help from colleagues or friends for reorganizing the content, warning students that it might be a frustrating experience since they may have to go back and forth searching for more information, rewriting the draft, and revising it.

However, the process approach has been attacked since it neglects the social-cultural contexts of writing learners. Considering this criticism, more attention has been paid to the social and cultural context of writing, focusing on the sociolinguistic and socio-cultural aspects. Therefore, the communicative approach, the functional approach, and the genre approach were adopted. It is important to mention that the first two approaches are the same in essence but different in terminology. However, the genre approach is “subsumed under the functional approach” (Ezza, 2010, p. 34).

Hunt et al. (2009) stress the importance of detailed instruction as one of the factors in effective teaching. This includes the teacher’s ability to explain exactly what students are expected to do and how to perform their tasks successfully. Similarly, Hall and Verplaetse (2000) argue that teachers can make classroom learning effective, playing a crucial role in enhancing language learners’ proficiency by acting as motivators, providers of accurate language models, and evaluators. In addition, teaching is important in language learning because only a teacher can diagnose the learners’ needs and problems to help them learn skills matching these needs (Corbett, 2003). Therefore, teachers have to employ activities that bring about language learning. Writing instruction is one of the most demanding jobs for EFL writing instructors since it requires writing teachers to dedicate much time and invest effort into assisting students in writing better in English (Salem & Abu Al Dyiar, 2014).

The teachers interviewed in Ahamed’s research (2016) recommend diagnosing student problems in academic writing and addressing them by providing opportunities for practice in and out of class and employing cooperative teaching methods such as pair and group work. To improve writing competence among learners, these teachers think that students should access a variety of grammatical resources besides focusing on discourse features for writing cohesive texts. In addition, writing students should use writing to express meaning and focus on the text as a whole rather than on individual sentences. There is a need to provide students with reading materials to improve their vocabulary in a focused way. Teachers should also respond to students’ writing by giving them immediate feedback and organizing their writing as a series of stages.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has caught the attention of ESL/EFL educators as a process-oriented approach to language teaching that focuses on communicative language teaching (Littlewood, 2004; Nunan, 2004; Richards, 2005). It requires learners to work cooperatively and support each other in the task. It is an example of learning by doing, which provides learners with skills to analyze their real-world communicative needs (Long, 2015). In other words, it is experiential learning, which means that language learners learn through doing tasks, allowing implicit and incidental learning to occur. Learning is task-based, not text-based, emphasizing mutual aid and cooperation among learners in collaborative methods such as pair and group work. Long adds that the philosophy of education underlying TBLT emphasizes the power of reasoning and inquiry and raises the challenges of implementing task-based pedagogy, such as the influence of the first culture on language learners’ performance and lack of experience. Alqahtani and Elumalai (2020) note that language learners’ engagement with tasks promotes their confidence since they have many opportunities to practice language inside the classroom and have no fear of making mistakes once they begin to analyze the language. In addition, the learners used lexis, discourse markers, and organizational patterns, showing how a text should be understood during group work.

However, some language learners might be skeptical about the usefulness of task-based pedagogy since they perceive teachers as a source of knowledge with the ultimate authority or have not previously experienced such a pedagogy. In addition, others have been raised to believe that competition, not cooperation, is the only way to advance. Therefore, writing teachers should provide language learners opportunities to practice this pedagogy to realize its benefits.

The research study by Alqahtani and Elumalai (2020) investigated the analysis of lexical and cohesive ties usage in undergraduate students’ writing by applying a task-based language learning methodology to thirty-five students from an advanced ESL reading class at King Saud University, Arts College in Riyadh for 15 weeks. Analyzing the required four written passages show that the subjects improved their language abilities in grammar and vocabulary, especially in the discourse analysis passages. In addition, they learned more about structure, identifying cause and effect, purpose, and function. The authors recommended giving special attention to sentence structure, grammar, syntax, discourse markers, or connectives. They also reported that shy learners tend to become very anxious when analyzing text in front of the class. Practice, planning, and encouragement can mitigate these challenges.

Alward et al. (2012) examined the role of explicit instruction on the learners’ use of hedges and boosters in persuasive writing in a sample of forty third-year Yemeni undergraduate students majoring in English at Sana’a University. While hedges such as “might” or perhaps” imply reluctance and withhold the writer’s full commitment to a proposition, boosters like “in fact” and “definitely” emphasize the writer’s certainty in the proposition (Hyland, 2015). Findings showed that prior instruction in hedges and boosters positively impacted the learners’ use of them. The experimental group participants improved their use of hedging and boosting significantly, while those in the control group did not.

Another recommended technique within the framework of the process approach is freewriting, which means jotting down ideas continuously for a set time from ten to fifteen minutes without thinking about what words or grammatical items to use (Jacobs, 1986) and without reviewing the sample for modification (Li, 2007). Freewriting emphasizes quantity over quality. Casanave (2004) related writing fluency to the ability to produce (or read) long segments of language with minimal hesitation and interruptions (p. 67).

Initially, freewriting was discussed by Elbow (1973, 1989, 1998, 2000), who subscribes to its value in improving students’ writing skills. Elbow (1998) argues that it is a stress-free activity since students do not “think of words and also worry at the same time whether they are the right words” (p. 5). Freewriting requires students to have two skills: creating ideas and criticizing them (Elbow, 1989). In the first stage, they write freely and generate ideas without paying attention to words or structures; however, in the second stage, they are expected to criticize their ideas, keeping the good ones and eliminating the irrelevant and the less expressive ones. It can be unguided or guided (Hwang, 2010). The former is self-managed by the student, and the latter is focused and teacher-sponsored (Elbow, 1998; Elbow & Belanoff, 2000; Lannin, 2007). While the former is perceived positively for increasing writing fluency, the latter is considered a tool for helping students overcome the difficulty of getting started writing (Elbow & Belanoff, 2000).

Freewriting also helps students stimulate their thinking by writing briefly for some minutes, generating more ideas about the topic (Jacobs, 1986), enjoying the writing experience, and feeling liberated and empowered (Elbow, 2000). As a student-centered activity, it allows students to ease the burden of writing and increases their motivation to write in English (Dickson, 2001).

On the one hand, practicing freewriting could play an important role in helping students develop their autonomy as L2 writers, and on the other hand, it could help them enjoy the experience and be proud of their achievement, either minor or major (Harmer, 2004).

To successfully achieve freewriting, teachers should be organized, disciplined, and methodical (Dickson, 2001). It requires teachers to prepare the students for freewriting, set up the task, ask them to write, collect their samples, and provide feedback on the content later, suggesting tips for improving their writing. In addition, Dickson (2001) suggests some prompts that would provoke the students’ thinking and motivate them to write, such as responding to a quotation or a proverb, writing a short story, listening to music, providing a picture, asking a question, or watching a video segment, emphasizing sharing and providing feedback.

Park (2020) conducted a study to examine the possible benefits of freewriting for EFL students in reducing anxiety and increasing fluency in an academic writing class. For data gathering, the participants completed pre- and post-writing anxiety surveys and wrote freewriting samples, pre- and post-essays, and reflections. The findings showed that students reported different degrees of writing anxiety, revealing poor performance of anxious students on the writing test. However, analysis of 540 freewriting samples showed improved fluency as the semester progressed. In addition, students generally expressed positive attitudes toward the freewriting activity, indicating that it enhanced their confidence, decreased their fear of evaluation, and deepened their thinking skills. However, they preferred having feedback on their writing and receiving topic suggestions from their writing instructors. They also did not like time limits on the freewriting activities. The results do not prove that freewriting is the remedy for EFL problems in writing, but they suggest that practicing freewriting regularly during class time could help EFL students develop a habit of reading, improve their writing fluency, enhance their confidence, and lessen their anxiety related to writing.

In addition, Penn and Lim (2016) examined the effects of freewriting on the development of Korean EFL students’ English proficiency in all language skills. An experimental group and a control group participated in the study. Results showed positive effects on the 51 participants in the experimental group in the four language skills. In terms of writing, they were able to write extended texts using a variety of lexical items.

Regarding the benefits of freewriting in reducing anxiety, Chen (2019) conducted a qualitative study in a three-credit EFL writing course at the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures at the National Sun Yat-Sen University in Taiwan. The eighteen freshmen were required to practice freewriting in the first thirty minutes each week for fifteen weeks and write a reflection on freewriting in the eighteenth week. Data analysis shows that seventeen out of eighteen students expressed positive comments on freewriting practices and revealed some beneficial effects, indicating that freewriting can be a powerful teaching tool in EFL writing courses. They mainly mentioned writing freely without pressure and expressing their thoughts without worrying about choosing the wrong words in English.

Journal entries or dialogue journals are part of the freewriting approach, which has many benefits. First, it involves writers writing freely without worrying about errors and time pressure (Spaventa, 2000; Yoshihara, 2008). In addition, it arouses the interest of students in writing, develops their fluency (Yoshihara, 2008), accuracy (Lagan, 2000), and raises their awareness of the need for clarifying writing to the reader (White & Arndt, 1991). In addition, practicing journals brings writing students closer to their teachers, lowers their anxiety, and increases their motivation (Tin, 2004).

Several researchers conducted research studies to examine the usefulness of adopting journal writing in ESL/EFL classrooms. For example, Tuan (2010) conducted a research study investigating the benefits of students’ engagement in journal writing. Eighty-five second-year students at the Faculty of English Linguistics and Literature of the University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Ho Chi Minh City participated after being divided into an experimental and a control group. The researcher employed quantitative and qualitative methods, using pre- and post-tests of essay writing to measure students’ proficiency levels in terms of fluency and accuracy. While the former relates to the student’s ability to produce language in real-time unhesitatingly, the latter concerns avoiding errors. Qualitative methods included observation and occasional interviews. Results substantiated previous arguments about the benefits of journal writing in terms of increasing motivation, enhancing writing skills, and building close relations between teachers and learners. Results also showed that students in the experimental group could produce more words in the post-test and complete the task faster. However, the accuracy level did not substantially differ between the two groups. Regarding scoring, while the students in the experimental group increased their scores by 1.49, the students in the control group improved by only by 0.46. In terms of motivation, 75% of the students in the experimental group responded positively to the questionnaire items regarding that. However, they indicated they still generate ideas in their mother tongue and translate them into the target language. Qualitative data, which includes occasional interviews and observations, revealed that the experimental group students get accustomed to journal writing relatively quickly.

Yoshihara (2008) examined the effect of dialogue journal writing in three creative writing classes at a private Japanese university, where thirty students participated in each class. Thirty-six volunteered to write dialogue journals, but only nine continued doing so throughout the course. The purpose of the study was to connect class content to students’ lives. For data collection and analysis, the researcher used journals written by 19 students who completed journals throughout the course outside the classroom. In addition, she administered a self-report questionnaire to reveal insights about students’ feelings about improving their writing and their attitudes toward writing journals in English. They emailed the journal entries to their teacher once a week, and he gave them feedback the same week, limiting them to content and excluding error correction. The researcher expressed his approval and disapproval of the content, raising questions about the topic’s meaning, thoughts, or suggestions. Analyzing their responses to the self-report questionnaire revealed positive results. Many students expressed positive feelings about submitting dialogue journals to their teacher and getting feedback, considering this exchange an enjoyable experience. Some students were positive about their ability to express their ideas in writing in English. Others were less confident.

1. Genre-Based Approach

The term genre is defined “as a social, dynamic and interactive process that emphasizes the nature of language as a social action” (Ezza, 2014, p. 575). Ezza (2014) reviewed writing courses in four Arab universities, King Saud University in Saudi Arabia, Birzeit University in Palestine, Qatar University in Qatar, and An-Najah University in Palestine, and concluded that these courses focused on lexicon and grammatical exercises. Such pedagogy is weak owing to insufficient attention paid to the writing stages. Instead, he proposes the genre approach. Therefore, he advocates practicing different genres in teaching English writing, such as academic prose, fiction, letter writing, email writing, review writing, and journal writing. He aims to encourage learners to write with a purpose and proposes including genre analysis in the writing syllabus.

1. Integrating Reading and Writing in EFL Writing Classes

Integrating reading and writing for effective instruction in EFL writing classrooms is not new. Different researchers found evidence for the usefulness of connecting reading and writing to enhance EFL students’ academic writing. Elley (1991) reviewed some studies that indicated the effectiveness of extensive reading programs compared to regular ones in terms of reading comprehension and enriching learners’ vocabulary. Nagy and Herman (1987) claimed that children between grades three and twelve learn up to 3000 words a year. Besides that, studies by Stotsky (1983) and Krashen (1984) showed the positive results of reading on learners’ writing skills. Moreover, it enhances the students’ confidence in dealing with longer texts, as Kembo (1993) pointed out, and it helps develop literacy skills in reading and writing, as Zamil (1992) noted. Reading involves many complex skills that help readers recognize the purpose of reading, use effective learning strategies, and monitor their comprehension of the text (Zaubal & Husin, 2011).

Many Arab EFL scholars have noted that Arab university students do not have enough practice reading long authentic texts in English (Ahmed, 2010; Al-Qahtani, 2016, Hassan & Dweik, 2021). They may read simplified versions of novels and plays (Ahmed, 2010). They are not ready to put in the effort and read for many hours, which affects the level of their writing because the more the person reads, the better the writing style and vocabulary they develop.

1. Using Rubrics

Some scholars claim that scoring rubrics improve teachers’ capacity to correct students’ written work precisely and to assess and grade them, enhancing their writing skills (Gulzar et al., 2017; Qasim & Qasim, 2015; Rini & Purnawarman, 2018; Sharma, 2019). Others proved the importance of involving students in establishing WSR criteria to help them understand learning expectations (Rini & Purnawarman, 2018).

Chowdhury (2018) defines WSRs as scoring guides for pursuing different tasks that require reflective thinking skills, carrying out projects, and delivering presentations, and they are used as “a scoring tool that sets criteria and standards for the students’ expected performance in a specific task, across 3 to 5 levels” (p.62). Moskal (2000) adds that a WRS is “a descriptive scoring scheme developed to judge the quality of a given writing sample depending upon established criteria” (p.1). It enables teachers to provide students with a guide to help them understand teachers’ instructions and to limit ignoring small mistakes (Gulzar et al., 2006), to obtain detailed feedback through self-assessment (Qasim & Qasim, 2015), and do self-monitoring (Bradford et al. (2016). All this is a useful and important source of feedback for students and teachers. On the one hand, it enhances the transparency of the assessed aspects of every task for the students (Chan & Ho, 2019), and on the other hand, it facilitates evaluating students’ achievements and progress for the teachers (Narvaez et al., 2019). For example, Qasim and Qasim (2015) conducted a study on the use of writing rubrics by Pakistani EFL teachers and found that four of their six participants recommended using a scoring rubric for addressing students’ mechanical writing errors. In addition, Turgut and Kayaoğlu’s (2015) study revealed that rubrics aided Turkish EFL students in meeting the criteria for excellent writing. Moreover, Kulprasit (2016) showed that raising awareness of the positive impact of WSRs among Thai EFL students helped them improve their attitudes towards rubrics, considering them useful tools for improving their writing proficiency and producing language.

Aldukhayel (2017) reported contradictory results when he investigated the clarity and familiarity of three scoring rubrics at a Saudi university’s preparatory year program (PYP) with 281 Arabic-speaking students enrolled in three different academic levels. The study assessed students’ midterm and final writing exam results and administered a 13-item online questionnaire. The data revealed that roughly 55% of students indicated that the rubrics help them diagnose their strengths and weaknesses. In contrast, about 41% of students believed that the information from the rubrics about their writing was unclear. These results raise questions regarding the quality of the rubrics used in the predatory program, claiming that they are insufficient and that the criteria set for providing evidence for the rubric qualities were unmet. The study implies that there is a need for administrators and teachers to consider the clarity of rubrics, make sure students are familiar with them, and carefully justify their use because unclear and unfamiliar rubrics can confuse and frustrate students. In addition, it can hinder their self-awareness in clearly understanding their writing scores, strengths, and weaknesses.

Alamri and Adawi (2021) employed a mixed-method study to investigate the EFL Saudi teachers’ perspectives using writing scoring ratings for correcting their students’ written work. One hundred and six Saudi EFL teachers from a pool of 1470 filled in the questionnaire voluntarily, 62 (58.5%) females and 44 (41.5%) males. Results showed that 80.2% generally corrected the tasks and provided feedback in class, with 26.4% using WSRs, 25.5% using student self-assessment, 17.0% using peer editing, and 5.7% using alternative assessment techniques such as journals or portfolios. Findings also show that writing scoring ratings allowed teachers to reflect on their students’ progress. While more than two-thirds of research participants (67.92%) considered writing scoring ratings beneficial to students, only 21.70% reported similar benefits to EFL teachers, and about eleven (10.38%) remained neutral. The participants’ comments concerning the usefulness of writing scoring ratings correlate with the quantitative results. The participating teachers described WSRs as beneficial for guiding the pupils, provoking their creativity and critical thinking skills, and enhancing their motivation. Seventy-six percent of the participating teachers indicated that they noticed some improvement in their students’ writing after using WSRs, which could be explained by making fewer mistakes, getting higher points, or improving the quality of their written texts. Results also revealed that most Saudi EFL teachers prefer correcting their students’ writings in class rather than using other techniques like WSRs, self-assessment, or journal entries and portfolios. Almari Adawi’s (2021) study proved that Saudi EFL teachers understood the usefulness of WSRs for improving students’ performance by giving constructive feedback, fostering critical thinking, and using self-assessment techniques without neglecting mistakes in spelling and punctuation. The researchers reported positive results regarding WSR users who could identify their writing difficulties and strengths. Moreover, the research participants agreed that WSRs help users pinpoint grammar, mechanics, coherence, and handwriting mistakes and promote higher-order thinking skills. It could be concluded that Saudi EFL teachers consider using WSRs positively, and if they use them, they do it infrequently.

1. Providing feedback

Correcting errors has been a controversial subject for many years. Because of this notion, providing corrective feedback has been a topic of discussion among EFL experts and researchers for many years. For example, some researchers like Hinkel (2004), Hyland and Hyland (2001), and Hyland (2003) strongly support giving feedback to ESL students, attributing positive attitudes of ESL students regarding having back their written texts corrected not only at the linguistic level but also at the global level.

Besides grading exams, Diederich (1974) discussed the importance of responding to students’ writing by providing comments, holding individual conferences, and having discussions with the students to provide positive feedback. This type of informal evaluation brings teachers closer to their students. Other scholars believe that teachers’ comments and feedback play a crucial role in helping learners produce better writing samples (Al-Hazzani & Altalhab, 2018; Williams & Jasmine, 2003), but others disagree (Doff, 1988, Truscott, 1996). Providing teacher feedback directs and aids students to produce written good quality work (Al-Sawalha, 2016; Al-Sawalha & Chow, 2012). For example, Al-Hazzani and Altalhab (2018) state that providing feedback is “an extremely valuable tool for indicating whether students are going in the right direction with their work or not,” claiming that it reinforces their understanding and corrects them through employing a variety of methods (p. 16). Williams and Jasmine (2003) hold similar perspectives claiming that providing feedback for learners’ writing samples helps them develop EFL writing abilities since they must revise their written assignments. According to Ferris (2003), if positive and effective written feedback is provided effectively, it will encourage writing learners to continue developing their skills. However, it should be provided constantly to help learners be aware of their current level of writing and how to improve it through time matching the writing instructors’ goals and expectations.

1. Written Corrective Feedback

Written corrective feedback is a written response to a linguistic error that has been made in the writing of a text by a second language (L2) learner (Bitchener & Storch, 2016), which is considered an instructional strategy that is commonly used in ESL settings aiming to improve students’ writing. It is crucial for error correction (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). However, many ESL experts question its usefulness in improving learners’ writing skills. This makes it an ongoing debate that has aroused the interest of many researchers to conduct research studies examining its usefulness to ESL/EFL writing learners. For instance, Bitchener and Knoch (2010) examined the effectiveness of written corrective feedback in a 10-month study focusing on two functional uses of the article system for 52 lower-intermediate ESL students in Auckland, New Zealand. The participants were divided into four groups; three received direct corrective feedback, and the fourth received no corrective feedback. While the direct corrective feedback to the first group included written and oral meta-linguistic explanations, the second included only written meta-linguistic explanations. The control group did not receive any corrective feedback. The participants produced five written texts (pre-test, immediate post-test, and three delayed post-tests). The results show that the participants in the three treatment groups outperformed those in the control group on all post-tests. In addition, there was a difference in effectiveness between the three treatment groups.

Two years earlier, Bitchener (2008) conducted a two-month study to investigate the efficacy of written corrective feedback given to 75 lower-intermediate international ESL students in Auckland, New Zealand. Similar to the previous study, four groups were assigned. Participants were required to describe what was happening in a given picture by producing three pieces of writing, a pre-test, immediate post-test, and delayed post-test, targeting the functional uses of the English articles *a* and *the*. The analysis of the writing samples revealed that students who received feedback in the immediate post-test outperformed those in the control group.

In the last ten years, many EFL writers in the Middle East started to examine the usefulness of written corrective feedback in improving writing accuracy, which showed positive evidence of the effectiveness of corrective feedback over no feedback (Khoshsima & Farid, 2012; Hashemnezhad & Mohammadnejad, 2012; Alharbi, 2016). For example, a study by Khoshsima and Farid (2012) investigated the effectiveness of explicit and implicit corrective feedback on descriptive writing accuracy of 39 Iranian intermediate EFL learners at Hamedan Islamic Azad University, where they were divided into two groups. The first group included 22 students who were given explicit corrective feedback, and the second comprised 17 students who received implicit corrective feedback. They received corrective feedback on three grammatical structures: The researchers concluded that corrective feedback on grammar could be useful for the short run, not the long one.

1. Peer feedback

Al-Hazmi and Schofield (2007) examined the effect of requiring enforced revision and peer feedback on the quality of student writing. The study aimed at improving the writing of low-proficiency Saudi college students. Fifty-one third-level students at King Khalid University participated in the experiment, writing two drafts at the pre-test stage. Only the experimental group was provided with a checklist to consider at the post-test stage. The researchers concluded that the subjects “were not ready to abandon their classroom’s traditional surface error focus” despite the research effort to improve their English writing (Al-Hazmi & Schofield, 2007, p.237). Similarly, my students always focus on grammatical errors, perceiving that correcting them is the most essential thing to improve their writing.

1. Integrating Technological Tools for Teaching and Evaluation

Technology has been the trend in education in the last twenty years, which is defined by Lim and Morris (2009) as “the appropriate mix and use of face-to-face instructional methods and various learning technologies to support planned learning and develop subsequent learning outcomes” (p. 283). It is vital for learning skills since it helps learners attain knowledge (Alqahtani & Elumalai, 2020) and enhances their confidence, giving learners an easy entry to web-based sources that enhance their learning opportunities (Ziegler, 2016). In addition, employing technology in education has shifted the focus from teacher-centered to more learner-centered classrooms (Ali, 2022), allowing students to gain face-to-face learning experiences in classrooms (Xu et al., 2020), to have a more effective educational environment (Bonk & Graham, 2012), and to organize the content (Ata, 2016). Moreover, it aligns with education in the twenty-first century (Porter et al., 2016). Alqahtani and Alumalai (2020) add that digital networking motivates learners and boosts their attitude toward language learning. Moreover, technology use increases the range of tasks in the classroom with web resources and improves communication among pupils (Skehan, 2003; Stone & Wilson-Duffy, 2009). Furthermore, it facilitates learners’ ownership of the tasks (Kern, 2006; Kern, Ware, & Warschauer, 2004; Reinders & White, 2010) since they use their personal computers and access information in available web resources.

Some educators believe that blending technology may enhance learning because WebQuests, forums, Zoom, blogs, and other online platforms help writing instructors use different tools for accessing information to carry out projects. Ali (2022) conducted a research study to examine the effectiveness of combining a project-based approach and blending technology in EFL writing, hoping that this combination would improve students’ writing skills and reduce their writing apprehension.

1. Remedies: My Personal Experience of Teaching and Assessing Writing

Following the recommendation of Al-Khatib (2017) to adopt an eclectic approach to language teaching, I adopt the process approach, the genre-based approach, and different techniques and activities. Besides error and text analysis, contrastive analysis, based on the Grammar Translation Method, is used occasionally to acquaint the students with similarities and differences between the two languages. Therefore, in the first writing course session for first-year students, the students write a paragraph about their choice to study in the English department. Then they compare and contrast their samples with a paragraph in the book Writers at work: The short composition by Ann O. Strauch, pages four and five, which appears in Appendix 1. Immediately, they realize that their samples are different in terms of organization and clarity; however, they do not indicate the differences exactly. Then, they try to answer the provided questions to identify the components of the paragraph: main idea, supporting details, and conclusion.

I follow the recommendations of Ahmed (2016) regarding the importance of diagnosing the students’ difficulties in identifying problems and providing solutions to help them improve their writing and be fully engaged and consciously involved in understanding obstacles facing them in writing in English. I ask the students to write a paragraph about their decision to become teachers in the first meeting of the writing course and compare it with the first assignment to ensure that the identified mistakes are similar. The aim is to determine the focus of instruction and feedback.

Adopting the process approach requires students to submit three drafts of each writing assignment. They revise and edit them, answering the raised questions and following the provided comments and corrections. In addition, they are engaged throughout the writing process; for example, when they work on in-class activities, I involve them in analyzing and correcting their mistakes, analyzing texts, and contrasting others. Although the focus is on communicating meaning and on content rather than form, I sometimes use explicit and descriptive instruction in grammar and vocabulary to help them acquire the structure of English. Regarding mechanics, many students ignore the rule to indent by five spaces at the beginning of each paragraph. Therefore, they are consciously reminded in almost every session to do that.

On account of Arab students’ collective mentality and social interaction preference, explained in detail in Chapter 7, the task-based approach is used frequently in class, allowing students to work together on a specific task. However, a time limit is needed to ensure they focus on working on the task since they tend to waste time chatting or discussing irrelevant issues.

To provide opportunities for practicing writing in stress-free environments, students practice free writing in class by writing for five minutes about everyday topics or responding to a quote. They also write personal journal entries frequently, sharing their personal experiences or perspectives on social issues such as violence. I make sure to include positive, encouraging comments without paying attention to errors in these entries. Students usually express their reluctance to practice free writing in class, especially at the beginning of the first semester, claiming that they do not have ideas and cannot concentrate, but their attitude improves over time. However, they react very positively to journal writing since they only share their personal experiences and receive positive feedback. Examples of journal entries appear in Appendix 2.

Due to the advantages of integrating reading and writing for developing EFL learners’ proficiency and because one of the Arab EFL problems is the lack of reading, I choose short articles from English newspapers about current affairs as part of my teaching. The aim is to provide opportunities for comprehensible input of authentic English and practice writing in class. To vary my methods, after posting the short article on Moodle and loading it on the screen, I read it aloud, emphasizing some words and phrases. After having an oral discussion and explaining the meaning of the new words in context, students are encouraged to work in pairs to find affixation and to identify the parts of speech of these words, aiming to raise the students’ awareness of word formation in English and their sense of the English language. In the next lesson, I review the article’s content, asking specific questions about the sequence of the events, the meaning of the new words, and their parts of speech. Using them in context follows. At other times, I only draw the student’s attention to the title to predict the article’s content. After reading it individually, students work in groups of three to four to discuss the article’s content and guess the meaning of the new words in context. Appendix 3 includes two examples of these articles and a worksheet to help students understand the content, learn the new words in context, and properly use them.

Similarly, blending media, mainly watching news broadcasting from English international channels, breaks the routine, exposes students to world events of different types, and provides them with other opportunities for comprehensible input. After watching the news, I expect the students to recall some events or to say something that catches their attention in the broadcasting. Then, the video is played again with pauses to help them follow the sequence of the news. Later, they work individually or with a partner to rewrite the news in their own words.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, error analysis is used to study learners’ errors and make inferences about the language learning process. Therefore, I collect the students’ mistakes from the first draft, categorize them and post the file to Moodle to work on in class. I make sure to include at least one error from each student and not to mention their names, aiming to promote a sense of equality. Based on my observations, the students are hesitant to acknowledge their mistakes at the beginning. However, over time, some are more willing than others to acknowledge and claim their mistakes. By the end of the school year, almost all of them talk openly about their mistakes, emphasizing their realization that every student makes mistakes.

The early stages of the writing course focus on sentences and paragraphs. At this stage, error categories could include: 1) inappropriate topic sentences; 2) long sentences; 3) excessive use of commas; 4) fragments or run-on sentences; 5) inappropriate conclusions; 6) subject-verb agreement; 7) cultural transfer; 8) grammar; 9) word choice, and (10) cultural transfer. When the course focuses on essay writing, the categories include thesis statements. In many cases, the sentences are grammatically correct but culturally inappropriate. To help students understand the influence of their culture on their writing that obstructs meaning and communication, samples of these mistakes are included in the error analysis sheets. Appendix 4 includes a sample of an error analysis sheet.

Data analysis in Chapter 3 shows that Arab students transfer the style of Arabic, writing long sentences with excessive use of coordinators and commas. Therefore, the focus of error analysis at the beginning of the first writing course is on the length of sentences. To help students realize the sources of their mistakes and to be able to correct them, I ask them to compare their drafts and sample drafts either from the book or from the internet. Many of them figure out the problem indicating the length of the sentences; however, at this stage, they do not demonstrate any knowledge or ability to shorten the sentences. Therefore, I try to help them gradually and carefully. I ask the students’ permission to show their sentences on the computer’s screen, not mentioning their names. I try to involve them by reading the sentences aloud and asking them to stop me when the sentence is meaningful enough. I also ask them to use the appropriate punctuation, reminding them that sentences end with a full stop. Similarly, I remind them of the structure of compound sentences, indicating the use of fanboys (*for*, *and*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, *so*). In the beginning, I avoid mentioning complex sentences. Later on, I ask them to underline all sentences in the samples of writing that appear in the book that include subordinators such as when, although, as soon as, etc. I also remind them to use the comma in complex sentences, separating the two clauses if the sentence starts with a subordinate.

To help students master the types of sentences, they practice recognizing such sentences and writing others in the class. Acquainting the students with the structure of sentences helps them improve in terms of using commas excessively. However, the problem is not eliminated easily. They continue including commas inappropriately. Therefore, I continue acquainting them using commas consciously and frequently to help them overcome the problem. They often work in pairs to justify using commas in their samples, following a set of rules on either a sheet of paper or a file in Moodle. To draw their attention to subject-verb agreement and the inappropriate use of articles (a/an), I usually underline them during correction and indicate the reason. Similarly, I underline the wrong word choice to draw their attention to the inappropriate use of vocabulary, providing the right word.

Chapter 4 addresses problems facing Arab students in expressing meaning, providing examples and reasons, and considering the audience. Samples of students’ paragraphs show that many topic sentences are long and indirect. While some do not reflect the title, others deviate from it and include unnecessary information. In addition, the paragraphs lack idea development, relevant content, and adequate organization. Other examples show text deviation, meaning students start a new topic in the concluding paragraphs. My data analysis shows ample evidence of students transferring features of Arabic language prose, such as repetition, indirectness, circularity, a lack of parallelism, and a lack of variation. Results also show transferring the features of the Arabic language and cultural modes of thinking. Regarding mechanics, many students ignore indenting five spaces at the beginning of each paragraph.

To help students state good topic sentences, I collect good samples of topic sentences and inappropriate ones from their first drafts and post them in Moodle for class work. Students work in pairs to identify why the samples are considered good or inappropriate and need revision. See Appendix 5 for a sample of this activity.

The following comments are very common in my feedback to clarify their meaning:

1) Do you mean….?

2) Please add a specific example here.

3) Please add a reason here.

4) Please add more information here.

5) What do you mean?

6) What are you trying to say?

To address problems related to the logical development of ideas and organization, peer review of students’ paragraphs follows a checklist of questions, which is provided at the end of each chapter in the book. For example, at the end of chapter three, which focuses on providing examples, the list for peer feedback includes the following questions:

1) Does the draft have any places they are unclear?

2) Is the draft organized clearly, according to the outline form on page 62?

3) Does the draft have a complete main idea sentence and a clear conclusion?

4) Does each example include a transition signal?

5) Are there sufficient specific supporting details for each example?

(Strauch, 2005, p.70).

My data also shows that my students transfer the features of the Arabic language and cultural modes of thinking. Analysis of errors and texts and contrasting texts of L1 and their samples are employed to acquaint the students with these errors, aiming to help them avoid including them in future samples. See Appendix 4, which includes different types of errors. While correcting these errors, I draw the students’ attention to the sources of each error and first language interference.

Data analysis in Chapter 5 shows that students struggle to create cohesive essays. At this level, error analysis sheets include an additional category, cohesive devices (CD), to remind the students of their functions and categories and highlight them in context. For example, words like also, in addition, moreover, and furthermore add more information to the sentences. Contrast words include, however, in contrast, while, whereas, etc. A file that includes the most common transition words and their categories is available to students, and they use it frequently to analyze their functions. Moreover, students work in pairs to find hedges and boosters that appear in samples of English essays in the textbook or other texts downloaded from the internet.

Analyzing different samples of good essays from Writers at Work: The Essay by Dorothy E. Zemach and Lynn Stafford (2008), acquaints the students with the structure of the paragraph essay, focusing on the thesis statement in the introductory paragraph, showing how it is developed in the body paragraphs. The book also includes outlines that illustrate the contents of the body paragraphs. To facilitate the task of developing a five-paragraph essay, the students develop the introductory paragraph, highlighting the topic sentence and the thesis statement, which is developed by including an outline. The first essay is based on a paragraph submitted in a previous course. The students rewrite it to include only the relevant information. It means they add background information to the topic sentence and some sentences that lead to the thesis statement. Then, they develop the outline, taking ideas from the paragraph and extending them. Adopting the process approach for evaluating the students’ samples requires the students to revise and edit the samples at least twice, following my comments and corrections that address content, organization, and cohesion besides grammar, capitalization, and punctuation. At this stage, the focus is on achieving a cohesive text using coordinators, sub-coordinators, transition words, and introductory phrases. Modeling and error analysis help students understand the use of cohesive devices. Modeling includes providing authentic paragraphs and asking the students to underline the cohesive devices and try to explain their functions. In addition, when their mistakes are collected, they are required to check the use of these devices in their texts.

To do so successfully, developing outlines is part of the classes’ agendas. After showing them samples of outlines, the students work in small groups to complete an outline for an essay in the book. They underline the main ideas and double-underline the supporting details in the essay’s paragraphs to complete the missing information in the outlines. After practicing this at least three times, they develop an outline for another essay. When they submit the first draft of the first assignment of writing an essay, they submit only the introductory paragraph, underlining the thesis statement, with an outline that includes the three topic sentences for each body paragraph, three details in the form of phrases, not complete sentences, and a concluding paragraph. After receiving my comments for revising the first draft, they revise and edit the introductory and the concluding paragraphs and the outline and add the first body paragraph. The students follow the same process in each lesson to add one more body paragraph.

One of the course objectives is to acquaint the participants with different genres of essays, focusing on explanatory, problem-solution, comparison-contrast, and persuasive essays. Similarly, peer review is also practiced here extensively at this level to help each other develop the content of the body paragraphs and revise and edit them.

Students’ examples in Appendix 6 show the improvement of three students, an advanced student, an average student, and a less advanced one, made from the first draft at the beginning of the year and the last one at the end. Unlike the first assignment, the advanced student wrote a good topic in the last assignment, used signals for providing examples, produced grammatically correct sentences, and provided a well-stated conclusion. Writing samples of the average student show a vast improvement in her writing. Although the topic sentence is inappropriate and very long, the student succeeded in using signals for expressing reasons and transition words like therefore and in addition to link ideas and a good conclusion.

Chapter 6 discussed problems encountered by undergraduate and graduate Arab students following the standard academic conventions when writing seminar papers. The focus is on analyzing information, paraphrasing, summarizing, and synthesizing. Data analysis reveals that Arab students lack the necessary language proficiency and academic skills to conduct research, including knowledge of the research paper writing process, sources, and methodology. The analyzed samples tend to rely on one or two sources for developing arguments, facing difficulties in synthesizing information from different sources and including their voices.

Besides plagiarism and patchwriting, students do not follow integral and non-integral citation rules consistently, including the author’s full name, deleting the year of publication, the page number of the direct quote, or the quotation marks. Despite modeling, explaining, and practicing intensively in the classroom, writing the list of references at the end of the paper poses another challenge.

To acquaint the students with the structure of English texts, aiming to help them summarize articles, they sit in pairs or small groups to analyze texts following written guidelines, which include the following:

1) Underlining the title.

2) Finding the main idea in each paragraph.

3) Underlining the supporting details of each paragraph.

4) Linking between the paragraphs and the title.

In the beginning, I used models of summarizing one paragraph only. Then, I engage them in summarizing other paragraphs. At a later stage, they practice summarizing one paragraph in class, either individually or in pairs. Gradually, they summarize more paragraphs at once. In the last stage, they summarize a whole text.

For paraphrasing, I start with modeling and paraphrasing sentences at first. Then, the students sit in small groups to paraphrase sentences while I move from one group to another to monitor their work and answer their questions. Gradually, we move to paraphrase paragraphs, explaining the importance of avoiding plagiarism, its rationale, and its possible consequences.

To summarize articles, I start with short paragraphs to long articles. After modeling and summarizing at least two paragraphs, the students sit in small groups to summarize short paragraphs. Gradually, the students summarize other paragraphs, adding one paragraph in each class meeting. In the end, they will be able to summarize one article.

The same procedure is followed for synthesizing, giving many examples before requiring the students to synthesize. I usually choose at least three sources that discuss the same issue and summarize them with the help of the students. Then I highlight the targeted information in one article and ask the students to work collaboratively, finding similar or different information on the same issue. We combine the common information from the two sources and move to do the same with the third source. At this stage, the students learn to quote directly from the sources and combine similar information in one sentence, adding the sources. In direct quotations, they practice two options: surrounding the quote with quotation marks, the name of the author, the year of publishing, and the page number at the end of the quote or including the author’s name and publication’s year before the quote, and the page number after at the end of it. Similarly, they learn to include indirect quotations either at the beginning or at the end of the sentence, using the right conventions. They practice including the author’s name followed by the year of publication in brackets at the beginning of the sentence or put them in brackets at the end of the sentence, separated by a comma.

They also learn to develop their arguments, including supporting research results and mentioning contradicting results, using the right transition words. These exercises take a lot of class time to ensure the students can synthesize information from different sources using the right verbs and expressions. Providing examples of reporting verbs used in context helps learners choose the right verb for developing their arguments, using the intended nuance. In-class practice includes exercises for using inclusive terms and pronouns to learn to avoid biased language. Similarly, avoiding generalizations in developing arguments includes practicing using the right terminology like women instead of females, adjectives as collective nouns, and hearing-impaired instead of deaf. To provide extra help and promote students’ self-monitoring skills, some websites provide guidelines for writing a research paper and choosing the right verb for referring to sources. A link to the 7th edition of the APA style guide and an outline sample are provided. See Appendix 8 to find files relevant to writing a RA. At the graduate level, the college posts the guidelines for developing an RP on its website, encouraging the students to consider them seriously.

1. Providing Feedback

With this extensive experience in teaching writing courses, I provide positive feedback, especially at the beginning to encourage the students to write and not to be inhibited by their mistakes. In addition, their primary focus at this stage is on grammar and spelling. Therefore, I try not to challenge their perceptions and start providing corrective feedback gradually, starting with positive feedback. For example, I started the written feedback by thanking the student for submitting the draft and mentioning the included details. Drawing the writers’ attention to the needed revision follows.

Oral feedback is also given frequently. While checking the drafts, I record students’ improvements and errors and report them in class, aiming to encourage them and arouse their attention to the repeated errors. Holding individual conferences with students twice a semester is beneficial. The students feel that their work is appreciated, which enhances their self-confidence. It is another chance for them to realize their strengths and weaknesses besides the sources of their mistakes.

Evaluating students’ performance and progress includes drafts and revisions, constituting 40% of the total grade. Due to the influence of the first culture and prior learning experiences, Palestinian Arab EFL students highly values exam. They are willing to invest effort into passing them successfully. The evaluation criteria include two quizzes and a final exam. 30% of the total grade is assigned to the former and 40% to the latter. Appendix 9 includes an exam sample that includes criteria and a division of grades, and Appendix 10 has a copy of my feedback after the first quiz.

1. Peer Feedback

As mentioned previously, my students’ main concerns are surface-level grammar and spelling errors. Therefore, in the beginning, I conduct peer assessment sessions using rubrics focusing on grammatical errors such as subject-verb agreement, prepositions, and mechanics. Only the most advanced students can assess content and organization in terms of the appropriate use of conjunctions and transition words appropriately. Therefore, peer assessment sessions that deal with meaning and clarity are delayed until the beginning of the second semester. Appendix 7 includes a form for peer review.

Starting in 2008, digital tools have been used in the form of a course website on Moodle, where all materials, including the syllabus, are posted. The posted materials for writing paragraphs and essays include short articles from newspapers, worksheets, files of coordinators, transition words, appropriate use of commas, types of sentences, and some exercises. During the pandemic, scanned pages from prescribed books were posted too. For the advanced course, samples of articles and guidelines for paraphrasing, summarizing, and synthesizing with samples are uploaded. The collection includes files of academic writing guidelines and samples of outlines.

In addition, students submit their drafts in the assigned folders on Moodle. Draft correction is carried out online, too, using track changes. Error analysis sheets and other exercises are carried out in groups using Padlet. In some cases, the lesson is delivered via Zoom. In the last few years, a Form has been created on the course website for students to share experiences and ask questions to their classmates when writing their research articles. In addition, I use some websites to detect plagiarism. Lately, the college inserted a special computer program to do that.

Exchanging messages with students via Moodle or email is another platform for communication and provides an opportunity for practicing writing informally, which improves their writing abilities indirectly.

1. Using Rubrics

Despite the advantages of using rubrics for developing students’ reflective thinking skills and promoting self-monitoring skills, using them at the undergraduate level seems infeasible due to time constraints and low student proficiency. However, the M. Ed students are encouraged to use the rubrics provided on the websites of advanced programs in the colleges for revising their papers before submitting them and to understand the adviser’s comments. Due to my long experience working with Arab Palestinian students who pursue their Master’s degrees at teacher training colleges in Israel, I doubt their use of such rubrics.

1. Discussion

Many researchers attribute the struggle of Arab EFL students in writing classes to the traditional methods that focus on surface-level errors and mistakes such as grammatical errors (Almari & Adawi, 2021; Alzamil, 2020; Anwar & Ahmed, 2016; Ezza, 2020; Gulzar et al., 2017; Ketabi, 2015; Tseng, 2018). Therefore, I have adopted more updated approaches that bring better results, specifically the process approach (Al-Hamzi, 2006; Al-Hamzi & Schofield, 2007; Jordab, 1997; Raimes, 1983; Sun & Feng, 2009; Zamel, 1983). Samples of student paragraphs and essays show improvements in students’ writing in terms of adopting a linear style and clarifying their writing by providing examples and reasons.

Adopting the process approach includes drafting, revising, and editing (Mogahed, 2013; Williams, 2020). I put great effort into practicing drafting, including revising and editing and prewriting activities such as brainstorming topics and outlining. Since some topics are offered in the book, most students choose them. It seems it is easier for them to brainstorm, especially in class. However, based on my observations, many students resist outlining as a prewriting activity and submit drafts without doing it. These observations correlate with the claims of Alodwan and Ibnian (2014) that Arab students tend to be reluctant to submit an outline.

Task-based activities foster communicative learning and skills since students work together on a specific task and time (Littlewood, 2004; Long, 2015; Nunan, 2004; Richards, 2005). These activities also promote cooperation among learners (Long, 20015) and enhance their confidence (Alqahtani & Elumalai, 2020). However, the results of Alqahtani and Elumalai’s (2020) study regarding improving students’ grammar and vocabulary should be investigated separately in the future.

Freewriting activities seem to work as a stress-free activity (Elbow, 1998) since writers should not worry about grammar, vocabulary, and spelling, easing the burden of writing and increasing their motivation to write in English (Dickson, 2001), enjoying the experience and feeling liberated and empowered (Elbow, 2000). Despite these advantages, most students do not express enthusiasm about freewriting activities at the beginning of the school year. It takes a while to understand and experience its advantages. However, they like the idea of writing journals because they receive positive feedback only, but they complain about the load of writing activities.

The genre-based approach is carried out mainly to practice different genres of essays. There is no time for exposing the students to letter or review writing. However, writing journals and freewriting could be considered part of the genre-based approach.

The results of Krashen’s (1984) study show the positive effects of reading on enhancing learners’ writing. Despite these positive results, EFL students do not read voluntarily. If they are given reading materials in writing classes, they are more likely to read them partially or ignore them completely. My observations seem to be true and accord with the claims of Al-Qahtani (2016) as well as Hussam and Dweik (2020). However, being realistic by requiring students to read short articles seems to work better since the students show interest when I read the articles in class, express enthusiasm and learn some vocabulary items and chunks of language. Based on my observations, many students recall the events of these short articles, the new vocabulary, and their parts of speech.

It is believed that using rubrics in writing classes helps learners follow teachers’ guidelines, draws their attention to small mistakes (Gulzar, et al., 2006), encourages self-assessment (Qasim & Qasim, 2015), and promotes self-monitoring (Bradford, et al., 2016). However, these studies did not show if using rubrics by students improves the level of their writing. For example, the results of research studies indicate students’ perceptions of rubrics, focusing on mechanical errors (Qasim & Qasim, 2015) and attitudes (Turgut & Kayaoğlu, 2015; Kulprasit, 2016). The observations of Qasim and Qasim (2015) as well as Aldukhayl (2016) could be relevant to my students’ perceptions of rubrics. Students tend to focus on mechanical errors, and not many are eager to use rubrics, which could be related to cultural perceptions of learning, preferring teacher-controlled classes.

The results of Aldukhayl’s (2016) research regarding the familiarity of Saudi students with preparatory course rubrics and their understanding of the rubrics show that 55% of the participants indicated that rubrics are useful in identifying strengths and weaknesses, but 41% did not see the rubrics as clear. Research results obtained by Alamri & Adawi (2021) showed that only a quarter of the participating teachers (25.5%) use rubrics. Although 67.92% believe rubrics benefit students, only 21.70% have the same belief as EFL learners. In this sense, rubrics could be beneficial if they are simplified and practiced systematically, consistently, and introduced gradually, taking into consideration cultural interference.

The literature shows that providing feedback is a controversial issue among EFL writing researchers; while some think it is beneficial (Al-Hazzani & Altalhab, 2018; Ferris, 2003 & 2004; Williams & Jasmine, 2003), others hold contradicting beliefs (Doff, 1988, Truscott, 1996). Since EFL issues at the college level started gaining momentum in the Arab world, some Arab EFL scholars have started to address writing instruction, including providing feedback. The results of Alamri and Adawi’s (2021) research corrected the tasks and provided feedback in class. In this sense, providing feedback in class correlates with my perception. I doubt the effectiveness of correcting assignments during class time, which should be dedicated to instruction and practice.

Similarly, examining the usefulness of corrective written feedback in the Middle East has started in the last ten years, showing evidence of improved writing accuracy (Hashemnezhad & Mohammadnejad, 2012; Alharbi, 2016). However, feedback is effective only in the short term (Khoshsima & Ma’Farid, 2012). Being aware of the ineffectiveness of focusing on accuracy, corrective feedback addresses content, clarity, and organization.

My observations align with the results of some of peer review or peer feedback research studies that show that students usually focus on surface errors in grammar and mechanics (spelling and capitalization) (Al-Hazmi & Schofield, 2007). In addition, Alamri and Adawi (2021) reported that only 17% of teachers in their research used peer editing. To avoid focusing on surface errors, students can peer review the writings of their fellows following samples of peer feedback forms provided in the books.

Technology supports planned learning, develops subsequent learning outcomes (Lim & Morris, 2009), and organizes the content (Ata, 2016). In the context of the described writing courses in this book, integrating technology is manifested in posting syllabi, and materials, submitting assignments on time, receiving feedback, receiving messages and responding, promoting learner-centered classrooms, and decreasing students’ dependency on teachers (Ali, 2022) and having a more educational environment (Bonk & Graham, 2012). The discussion of (Skehan, 2003; Stone & Wilson-Duffy, 2009) on improving communication among pupils is relevant here. In this sense, students sent me messages and responded to mine.

Using personal computers to access information from available web resources facilitates students’ ownership of the tasks (Kern, 2006; Kern, Ware, & Warschauer, 2004; Reinders & White, 2010). These claims are especially true when students are writing research papers.

Other factors that hinder the development of Arab EFL learners at the college level should also be considered to understand the challenges facing them in writing classes and provide the necessary help and support. The discussions of Mohammed and Alshenqeeti (2020) as well as Yong (2010) regarding the gap between the L2 writing requirements and skills in the two educational settings, high schools and universities, is relevant in this context, which should be taken into consideration for designing writing programs and syllabi for writing courses.

1. Conclusion

This chapter included a review of writing instruction and evaluation, adopting an eclectic approach. It discussed different factors, such as ineffective, outdated teaching methods that do not offer good results in improving college Arab EFL learners when writing in English.

Adopting the process approach is also demanding for writing teachers and EFL students. It requires both to work hard to achieve satisfying results. However, students should be ready to write research papers in terms of their language proficiency and intellectual abilities. At the undergraduate level, it should be offered only to those who demonstrate the required skills in English and thinking abilities. At the graduate level, there is a need to offer preparatory courses at colleges and universities to ambitious students to acquaint them with the necessary skills to meet the academic demands of writing a research paper.

The genre-based approach is also used to acquaint the students with different types of essays. Time and effort should be devoted to helping students with unfamiliar genres, such as argumentation and persuasion.

In the different levels of writing courses, error analysis, text analysis, and contrastive analysis were employed to help learners understand and identify the sources of their errors. While text analysis at the first level included paragraph structure and development, it focused on essay writing at the second level, emphasizing the function of the thesis sentence and how it is supported by other sentences, aiming to reduce repetition and elaboration could be reduced by exposing Arab students to more texts in English. At the advanced level, texts were analyzed in terms of structure, the use of unbiased language, and developing arguments.

Contrastive analysis is used at all levels to familiarize our students with the differences between L1 and English academic writing, showing similarities and differences. First culture interference as a factor for causing errors was also part of error and text analysis and contrastive analysis.

Rubrics could also be useful to promote students’ reflective skills, thinking about their mistakes and identifying their strengths and weaknesses. However, they should be simplified and practiced frequently to achieve their objectives.

Time should be assigned in writing classes to provide teachers’ written or oral feedback and peer review, which should be practiced using ready forms available in books for teaching writing.

The discussions in Chapter 7 addressed the impact of first cultural interference on the writing of Arab EFL students, which poses another obstacle to expressing themselves well in English and hinders communicating effectively with native speakers. Besides considering this type of interference as a factor that hinders learning, there is a need to acquaint writing instructors with the culture of their students to help them overcome difficulties that stem from the native culture of the EFL students.

It would be beneficial for EFL teachers in the Arab world who do not come from the Middle East to review some literature about Arabic-Muslim culture and its effect on Arab student writing.

Technological tools could facilitate instruction, develop discipline and enhance students-centered classrooms in levels 1 and 2. At the advanced level, it allows accessing information online, facilitates students’ ownership, and promotes their autonomy. However, teachers should be aware of some students’ plagiarism attempts and find ways to detect that.

It could be concluded that writing instruction is very demanding and tiring for teachers and students. It requires needs investing efforts constantly and continuously. It is rewarding when students manage to improve their writing.

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*Appendix 1*

B Short compositions

A short composition states and develops one main idea. If the short composition is just one paragraph, that paragraph will include the main idea, supporting ideas and details, and the conclusion.

**Sample 1**

The sentence states the main idea. This sentence presents the supporting idea. This gives details about the supporting idea. This sentence presents another supporting idea. This sentence gives details about the supporting idea. This sentence gives more details. This sentence presents another supporting idea. This sentence gives details about the supporting idea. This sentence gives more details. This sentence states the conclusion.

In a short composition with several paragraphs, the main idea is in the first paragraph. The conclusion is in the last paragraph.

**Sample 2**

This sentence states the main idea. This sentence presents a supporting idea. This gives details about the supporting idea. This sentence gives more details. This sentence gives more details.

This sentence presents another supporting idea. This gives details about the supporting idea. This sentence gives more details. This sentence gives more details. This sentence gives more details.

This sentence presents another supporting idea. This gives details about the supporting idea. This sentence gives more details. This sentence gives more details. This sentence states the conclusion.

**Practice 4**

Read the following short composition. Then answer the questions below it by giving the sentence numbers.

|  |
| --- |
| Wrong Number   **1**Phone calls for the wrong number seem to come at very bad times. **2**For example, a few weeks ago I was enjoying a snack and a movie when the phone rang. **3**As I was running to the phone, I tripped over the dog and found myself on the floor. **4**When I got to the phone and picked it up, a strange voice asked for Julie.  **5**I also get wrong numbers when I’m in the bathtub. **6**For example, last weekend I was enjoying a nice hot bath when, of course, the phone rang. **7**At first, I didn’t move, but then I worried that it might be an important call. 8I grabbed a towel and rushed to the phone, just to hear a voice ask, “Is this Fran’s Home-style Restaurant?”  **9**Somtimes I get a wrong number when I’m cooking. **10**Last night, the phone rang while I was preparing dinner, and the person calling couldn’t believe that he got the wrong number. **11**He started arguing with me about the names. **12**I hung up furiously and rushed back to my burned dinner. **13**Well, I’ve had enough, so from now on I will let my answering machine pick up phone calls. *Adapted from a composition by Valerie Redon Gabel* |

**1** Which sentence states the main idea of the composition? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**2** Which sentence gives the first supporting idea? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3 Which sentence gives details about the first supporting idea? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**4** Which sentences gives additional supporting ideas? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**5** Which sentence states the conclusion? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

This is adopted from the book called “Writers at Work: The Short Composition” by Ann O. Straunch (2005), p. 4.

*Appendix 2*

My Journal

I am going to tell you about what happened to me in the year after finishing high school. After high school, I started to think more about my future by asking myself a lot of questions, particularly questions that deal with my educational future, such as what should I study, where should I study? So, my recent plans were to take a driving license and to register into a psychometric course. The psychometric period affected me very badly. It was a bad experience for me, and I felt a little bit depressed because of it. I hated it because of something called quantitative reasoning, which is, in other words, everything that deals with math, and I hate math since my childhood. Also, as you might know, each question should be solved in a few seconds, which seated me into high pressure. On the another hand, I enjoyed my driving lessons so much, and I took my driving license from the first test, which it was a marvelous achievement for me because according to my family, most of them got their driving license after ten tries. Therefore, I truly enjoyed my driving lessons. I think that my psychometric experience made me register to study English at Beit Berl College, which is a great and a big decision, and that leads me to my favorite saying, which is “everything happens for a reason”. I hope I will succeed this year and in the other two years that I have at the college.

I am sure you will.

*Appendix 3*

A copy of a short article from a newspaper in English

A worksheet to help students understand the article “Man charged with murder of former partner in her Haifa flat”

Man charged with murder of former partner in Haifa flat

Noa Shpigel

Prosecutors on Tuesday filed an indictment in Haifa District Court against a 28-year-old man for the murder last month of his former partner, Najah Mansour, in her apartment in the Kiryat Haim neighborhood of Haifa.

Over the previous three year, the indictment states the relationship between Samari and Najah was rocky, and she had filed several complaints with police against him and his cousin, Nimr with whom she had been romantically involved in the last year. The complaints filed involved theft of money, threats and damage to Mansour’s property. The indictment notes that Nimr was convicted as a result of one of Mansour’s complaints and sentenced to nine month’s imprisonment.

Samari allegedly came to Mansour’s apartment last month armed with a knife and stabbed her to death. In the request to detain Samari until the end of legal proceedings, which accompanied the charge sheet, it says that police arrested Samari shortly after the killing because he wasn’t wearing a mask and his clothes were bloody. Under questioning he said his clothes were bloody because he worked in a slaughterhouse.

He denies all the allegations and claims that he had never been in a relationship with Mansour. But he requested for the detention states that Mansour expressed her fears about Samari to her family.

Samari has a criminal record, including weapons charges and attempted theft. His attorney, Basil Falah, said that his client “argues that he was passing the area by chance and did not harm the deceased”.

Please read the article and answer the following questions.

1) List the names of the people mentioned in the article.

2) Add important information mentioned about each of them.

3) Which word does the writer choose to describe the relationship between Mansour and Samari? rocky

4) What did the prosecutors file against Samari? an indictment

5) Describe the scenario of killing Ms. Mansour.

6) Does he acknowledge the charges? denied

7) What is the meaning and part of speech of the following underlined words:

1. Aggravated theft

2. Indictment

3. Romantically involved

4. Imprisonment

5. Allegedly came

6. Stabbed her to death

7. His clothes were bloody

8. Sentenced to nine months

9. Weapons charges

10. Attempted theft

8) Please find the meaning of the following words in the article.

1. An official statement accusing someone of committing a serious crime - indictment

2. Flat - apartment

3. A written or spoken statement in which someone says that they are not satisfied with something - a complaint

4. Taking somebody to the police station accusing him of committing a crime - arresting

5. To keep someone in a police station- detain

6. Arms - weapons

7. Lawyer - attorney

8. A dead person - deceased

A second sample of a short newspaper article, which is discussed orally in class.

In-laws held in abuse of Afghan girl, 15

KABUL

BY GRAHAM BOWLEY

The Afgan girl’s nails had been pulled out, the skin on her ear and nose had been twisted with pliers, and she had been kept in a dark, filthy basement bathroom without power food, or water for five months by her husband’s family for refusing to go into prostitution, Afgan government officials said.

But she was finally freed by the local police in Baghlan Province, in Northeastern Afghanistan, last week and will be sent to India for further medical treatment, the Afgan Interior Ministry said.

The case of the girl, Sahar Gul, 15, has caused something of a sensation in Afghanistan, underscoring the unfinished business of advancing women’s rights here.

Her mother-in-law and sister-in-law were arrested last week, officials said. Her father-in-law was arrested Monday evening, according to Rahima Zarif, the provincial director of women’s affairs in Baghlan.

The police were still searching for her husband, Ghulam Sakhi, 30, a soldier in the Afghan National Army who served in Helmand Province, the Interior Ministry said.

He had fled, officials said.

President Hamid Karzai spoke out about the girl’s plight Sunday, saying that the case had to be pursued and the people responsible should be arrested.

Her mistreatment began after she was married six months ago, when she was 14.

The girl, from Badakhshan Province, and her husband did not know each other well, Ms. Zarifi said.

When her new in-laws tried to force her into prostitution, she refused, and they locked her in a downstairs bathroom in their home in Dhiney Ghuri in Pul-Kumari, the capital of Baghlan Province, Interior Ministry and provincial offices said. They would not let her call her family, and they denied her food. They also beat her with a rod, officials said.

She was released after her mother travelled to Baghlan and her uncle alerted the local police, who forced open the door to the room where she was being kept.

Munshi Abdul Majid, the governor of Banghal, said the search was continuing for the husband and for others responsible for the girl’s abuse.

“This is un-Islamic and inhumane act”, he said.

*Jawad Sukhanyar and Sharifullah, Sohak contributed reporting.*

Adapted from Haaretz newspaper

*Appendix 3*

A sample of an error analysis sheet

*Good topic sentences. Please work with a partner to identify the reason.*

1. My sister Layan is very honest.

2. My father is my role model.

3. Earth has witnessed many preposterous wars in the past few years.

4. I have the most compassionate sister in my whole world.

5. My dog Boyka is very annoying to my neighbours.

6. My friend Ruba is very nervous.

7. 2020 was a year of many significant events that changed the world.

8. My best friend is so funny.

9. Technology is constantly changing.

10. My grandmother Ahlam suffers from Alzheimer’s disease.

11. My mother Polina is an admirable figure for me.

12. My oldest cousin is very reckless.

*Topic sentences that should be revised*

1. Five months ago I got married and I moved to my husband's house, and there was a cement factory next to our house making noise.

2. The world is in a huge current world wide pandemic due to the corona virus, and it’s going out of hands.

3. Having an older sibling is wonderful, I have one brother older than me, He is so nice to me and he care a lot about me since I am his younger sister.

*Verb tenses*

1. I was the person who take the first bite and it was the worst cake I had ever eaten.

2. For example, for somehow she succeed to send her car at the same month for three times to the garage.

3. Although her being a hard worker, she always end of quitting her job.

4. Her kindness is so special that I never met someone like her before. For example, when I had a bad day at work, no one notice me, but she does.

5. I hardly hold myself and luckily I didn’t laugh because our boss was furious.

*Sentence structure*

1. Another example, my sister is a social person.

2. For instance, the war of a stray dog ,in October 1925 , a Greek soldier was shot after allegedly crossing the border into Bulgaria for chasing his runaway dog.

3. Another annoying behavior, last month I went to grocery shopping.

4. Another example , my mom was traveling for work so we didn’t have food to eat , I don’t know how to cook , but thanks to my father he tried cooking And fed us.

5. At 9 oclock you won't see many people out doors, and only the voices of the street's dogs and cats barking and meowing you can hear at night. The opposite of Haifa where you can hear the noises of people shouting and fighting down the streets, the cars raising and the whole city don't even sleep.

6. To give another example two years ago I wanted to move from Sderot to the central of Israel, Aunt Lesley suggested me to move in with her for free rent.

*Word choice*

1. The age that the government allows people to legally drive is when they're 16 years old. On behalf of that, multiple young teenagers rush to get a driving license in order to drive cars and that comes with a lot of serious consequences. (Therefore; many)

2. It hurts one’s feeling and leads to less self-confident. (self-confidence)

*The need for including commas*

1. After Layan's troth I looked at sarah and told her sorry but she just stood there and told me that it was her fault to make us the cake and went to her room angrily.

2. For instance, I have a phobia of snakes, and because my luck was bad; I saw snakes three times in our garden.

3. Althouge the government think this is the best solution for preventing this disease outbreak it is definitely won’t work due to the rising morbidity every time that we emerge from the curfew.

*Unnecessary commas*

1. Boyka jumped over my neighbour fence, and stepped over my neighbour garden and piss all over the grass.

2. I still don’t know how he entered my neighbour's house, and wrack his kitchen upside down.

3. Nevertheless, these government policy of curfew didn't work in Israel, there are still a large number of sick people who are hospitalized and many dead people from this terrible disease - Corona.

4. Another example happened two years ago, there was an association that collected donations, clothes, and food for orphans.

5. She is a kind person, in any time I need her she always be by my side.

6. We began being disturbed by the sound of the factory that works even in the late evening hours, in the evening they prepare the bellies in the factory so that the truck drivers come in the morning and take the cement and distribute it.

7. Another example happened two years ago, when my friend and I were going to the party.

8. The world was first introduced to, Black Lives Matter, movement which blocks many streets over the USA in order to convict the police officer in committing a homicide.

9. Another instance, is that this virus is not just a normal virus, it will torture you before it kills you or give the immunity to it and keep you safe from others.

10. For example, when she was alone in her house, she took her medication twice, as a result, she got a high sugar level, and we was so worried about her.

*Very long sentences*

1. In the last decade we all witnessed some serious developments and changes when it comes to technology such as: new advanced mobile phones that could replace a lot of things like an alarm clock, cameras, notebooks and so much more, in addition to that video games are getting so realistic in terms of graphics and visuals which makes them more appealing, for instance a video game called’’ GTA ‘’ this video game is basically a virtual world that you can do whatever you want in it with your fictional character , this game can seem so realistic that many children are taking it way too seriously ,and it's quite easy to get addicted to it.

2. But there are negative qualities about her, like: she is irresponsible person like she doesn’t do her homework for school, doesn’t listen to her parents talk, when she get into trouble she just run away without listening to anyone.

3. For example, when I enlisted in the army and was in training I had a very hard time accepting the fact that I was in an army routine and would not see my family for a long time, but my mother was always there for me as a supportive shoulder and came to visit me several times just to calm me down.

4. For instance, last year when my uncle and his wife traveled abroad, they told him to take care of the home, but when they went, he started to invite his friends in order to make a party and instead of caring home he destroyed it.

*Appendix 5*

*Error Analysis 1*

*The following sentences are good topic ones. Please raise your hand to tell us the reason for considering it as a good topic sentence.*

1. I really enjoyed my last trip to Acre with my family.

2. I really enjoy drawing whenever I have the time to.

3. I enjoy going to new places and have new experiences especially restaurants.

4. Buying a car can be very helpful in many ways.

5. I really enjoy going to the gym.

6. I draw as often as I can for several reasons.

7. Duolingo app is one of the most effective learning foreign languages thorough out the world.

*The following topic sentences should be revised and edited.*

1. When I was little, I had a passion for art and I grew up drawing a lot, therefore, my favorite hobby is drawing or painting for many reasons.

2. I used to drink soda and soft drinks for years . drinking a lot of bottles during the day.

3. Barak Singer is my husband.

4. Recently more than one hundred and fifteen countries around the world were infected by coronavirus, and the number of patients is increasing every day, and there are several reasons that makes coronavirus spread around the world.

5. I choose to write about abortions and why should they be legalized in my opinion.

6. I made a major purchase one time in my life and it was for a car.

*The following sentences are incomplete. Please add what is necessary to turn them to complete sentences.*

1. In addition, big number of families have two or even more cars which leads to the same results.

2. One reason I can express my thoughts through drawing and painting.

3. Another reason I can make a beautiful art and upload it on my IG account.

4. To quit this habit for many reasons.

*The use of the comma in the following is inappropriate. Please identify the reason and correct the sentences.*

1. The modern era brought new changes in our lives, it seems that everything went upside-down.

2. In addition to that, creating good art requires a lot of patience and time, hence, it taught me how to be patient in order to accomplish my goals in life.

3. Relating to my personal case, there are many reasons of choosing my husband, I will refer to three of them.

4. Before I enrolled to college I had to do a major purchase so I can be prepared well for college, I had to purchase an expensive laptop that is suitable for studying and doing homework.

5. Reading brings joy to many people, moreover, it can lead to many benefits in our health.

*The following sentences should be edited.*

1. First of all, I can save a lot of time besides my friends who take the bus.

2. This is because of the many advantages that comes with physical exercise.

3. 8 years ago, I have made a big decision in choosing English Language as a major at university.

4. For instance, giving one sentence and writing it in several variations (once in compound kind, than in complex and so on...) it is the right way for our brains to absorb the information.

5. I listen to music in different languages for example, Korean and French music and that helps to understand the language and the way the words pronounced in that language.

6. Because whenever I am sad, discourage, disappointment and tired I immediately go to my room and start draw.

7. These days everyone have a car and it’s a necessary thing in every home and am so happy for having my own car.

8. Ministry of health recommended to stop travelling to the countries which have many infectors by Coronavirus like Italy.

9. One reason having a car can give you the opportunity to visit all places you want to reach. not like public transport which is limited in reach and can only drive you to specific places.

10. Second, it might be spread from human to human, maybe not directly. Because you might touch something an infected person had touched and then you will touch your mouth, eyes and nose with your hand so you might get infected however you might infect other people around you.

*The following sentences are very long. Please work with your group members to shorten, revise and edit them.*

1. Thus, I practice speaking new sentences and, if I say them incorrectly the app corrects me immediately so, I repeat the attempt to pronounce them correctly therefore, my English gets better.

2. Finally, it helps me financially. It stopped me from overspending on junk food, the membership to the gym isn't that costly also putting exercise on my schedule doesn’t allow me to have the time going shopping, therefore, I can't spend money on unnecessary liabilities.

3. The second reason is that women can decide to have an abortion as a result of many reasons. It can be a rabe result, it can be a mistake, it can be just this one time that 2 people were not careful, it can even be an incest, it can be criminals who forced them to have sex with them, it can be because they are too young or not Financially stabilize , it can also be because the baby is not healthy and will suffer for his whole life.

*Appendix 6*

*The first draft of the first assignment written by a good student*

Why do you want to study English at Beit Berl College?

I want to study English because it is a global and international language that we should learn about it because it's make us easily communicate with the others, also I want to study English to improve my language skills that will make me a good teacher in the future who will hopefully help her students to be good in English subject, and the most important I love English language and I want to learn more about it.

I choose to study English in Beit Berl College because of its location, the good lecturers, and a lot of people encourage me to choose Beit Berl, in addition of that after studying four years in the college I will have teaching certificate and B.Ed. degree who will allow to me to work as a teacher in schools, as a translator, and I can continue studying to have M.A in English.

*The first draft of the last assignment written by the same student*

Plastic surgery is a perfect way to makes people feel satisfied with theme's look and be more beautiful. However, in my opinion, plastic surgery is more harmful than useful to people.

It is true that plastic surgery gives people a chance to become the look they are so much desire, and be more confident, but there is a big probability to put theme's health and bodies in a risk. According to the Mayo Clinic,'' there are multiple risks, as with any surgery. Scars, nerve damage, infections, and blood clots are all possible complications''. For example, Jocelyn Wildenstein, an American socialite, who had some extensive cosmetic surgeries to her face, which makes her look creepy.

Although plastic surgery can fix, for example, a nose break, or body's damages, it is so expensive. According to the American Academy of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, Americans spent over 7 billion dollars on plastic surgeries.

Even though plastic surgeries make people feel better about themselves, it can be addictive. According to some researchers, social factors play a major role in plastic surgery addiction. Unfortunately, people now exposed to extreme views of beauty from a lot of places such as; films, magazines, and music videos. Thus, it makes people (especially young people) think they are ugly, which make them addicted to plastic surgeries to be more beautiful. So, plastic surgeries are harmful than useful to people.

*The second sample*

*The first draft of the first assignment written by an average student*

Why do you want to study English at Beit Berl College?

Choosing what do want to study in college or which college to go to is a complicated and confusing process, we need to make sure we went to a great college with a suitable Curriculum. So that’s what I looked for in Beit Berl College, and I had a friend that went to the college and I only heard great things about. It's also the closest to my town and may grades weren't a problem, so i enrolled and got accepted.

The reason I choose English specifically cause I honestly have a huge love and respect to the language, and the English program in Biet Berl College is strong as I heard and very good.

Well, at the end I saw that it's the best decision for me to study at this college, and I hope it would be a great learning process.

*Draft 1 the 6th assignment: Taking a gap year before college.*

Although many people claim that taking a gap year before college is unnecessary and a waste of time, it must also be recognized that it will be a spectacular way to explore and learn about life between high school and college. I believe that taking a break before college to explore and learn more about themselves and life in general is something everyone should do.

One reason is that spending the gap year volunteering will not be considered a waste of time. Learning to become an active and responsible person in community is part of living in this world. Therefore, volunteering will give future students a chance to take responsibility and know more about their community. In addition, maybe volunteering would fire them up with passion for a certain type of volunteering. Such as, volunteering for public health and they will end up loving it and major pre-med in college.

Another reason to take a break before college is that College is a big investment and very expensive. Therefore, taking a gap year will give students time to prepare financially. An extra year to prepare can help them earn money if the students spent the year working. In addition, it can give them time to apply for scholarships or other ways that can help make their tuition more affordable.

In addition, studies had shown that those who take a gap year perform better in college and are more satisfied with their careers after college. As the admissions officers at the famously competitive Harvard agrees saying, "With taking a gap year students will arrive on campus ready to join student clubs, succeed in their their exams, and make new friends with all of their hilarious stories that they have experienced in their gap year. Most importantly, they will be full of energy and excited for college".

To sum it all up, I strongly believe that taking a break before college will be useful for future students. Moreover, it will not be a waste of time as some people claim.

*Appendix 7*

PEER FEEDBACK FORM

Writer’s Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Reviewer’s Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Answer these questions about the introduction. Mark each box

Does the introduction have an interesting hook?

Does the introduction include background information?

Is the thesis statement in the introduction?

1. On your partner’s essay, underline the thesis statement twice.
2. Answer these questions about the thesis statement. Mark each box

Does the thesis statement tell you the topic?

Does the thesis statement tell you the writer’s opinion?

1. Underline the topic sentence of each body paragraph.
2. Did you understand the explanation in each body paragraph? If not, write the number of the number of the paragraph(s) you didn’t understand here: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Answer these questions about the conclusion. Mark each box

Does the conclusion summarize the writer’s main points?

Does the conclusion make any new main point?

Does the conclusion refer back to the hook or introduction?

1. On the essay, draw a star (**\***) in the margin by your favorite sentences. Choose two or three.

Choose two or three.

1. Were there any sentences you didn’t understand? If so, write a question mark (**?**) in the margin next to the sentence.
2. Look for transitions such as FANBOYS, *in addition*, *however*, *because*, and, *therefore*. Circle them. How many of these transitions did the writer use?
3. Any other comments: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

This page is taken from the book “Writers at Work: The Essay” by Dorothy E. Zemach and Lynn Stafford-Yilmaz (2008), p.55

*Appendix 8*

*A sample of an outline for an article paper (AP)*

**Literature in EFL Classrooms**

I. *Introduction*

II. *Literature Review*

a. Historical background

b. Advantages for teaching literature

c. Thinking skills for teaching literature (HOTS and LOTS)

d. Disadvantages or problems for teaching literature

e. Pedagogical approaches

* Personal-Response Approach
* Stylistic Approach

III. *Selecting literary texts*

a. Factors to be taken into account

b. What to teach (genres) and advantages

IV. *Literature and the four language skills*

a. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing

V. The practical section

* Personal-Response Approach
* Stylistic Approach

VI. *Conclusion*

**Academic writing guidelines**

**All essays should include the following:**

1. Introductions
2. Thesis Statements
3. Conclusions
4. Proper Paragraph Development
5. APA Citations and Reference List

* Do not use first person point of view: *I, me, we, our, us*, etc.
* NEVER use second person point of view: *you, your*, etc.
* Do not use phrases such as *I think that, I believe that, I feel that, in my opinion*, etc.
* Do not use these words: *IT, OF, BY, BEING, ONE*,
* Do not use slang or other informal diction.
* BE PRECISE AND CLEAR. AVOID Wordiness: *the fact that, at that point in time, in other words, play a role, due to, as a result of, as to why, whereas, thus, therefore, which is, the most common, one of, not only, but also, very, extremely, really, a lot, great, best, usually, greater, many, most, some, a little, a few, often, sometimes, oftentimes, can be established, such as, just as, of this, is that, the fact that, means that, for many reasons, all these, serve to, to name a few, in order to, when it comes to, as noted, on the part of, by means of, after all, this means that, the reason is, in general, again, once again*, etc.
* Don't give readers commands such as: *Be sure to....* or any similar sentences.
* Avoid negatives (use *failed* rather than *did not*, for example)
* Don't use words like *important, imperative, vital, essential, valuable, key, inevitable, paramount, significant, necessary, core, fundamental, priority, pivotal, evident, unique*, or other synonyms for these words.
* Do not editorialize your writing, including words like: *unfortunately, virtually impossible, well worth, obviously, hopefully, fortunately, invaluable, undoubtedly, assuredly, literally*, etc.
* Write out all contractions: *can't* should be *cannot*, for instance.
* Do not begin sentences (or phrases/clauses within sentences) with ANY of the following words: *AS, IT, IN, THERE, THIS, THAT, THEY, THEIR, BY, IF, WHEN, WHILE, WITH, BECAUSE, THROUGH, WITH*
* Do not use *THAT* when referring to people. The pronoun *WHO* refers to people.
* Under no circumstances should you use these words at all: *NEED, MUST, SHOULD* – these words imply that you are giving instructions to your reader.
* *to be* verbs should be used sparingly: *is, are, was, were*, etc...
* Use commas and semi-colons properly.
* In a series of three or more nouns or noun phrases, insert a comma before the word *and* or *or*.
* Do not make announcements such as *this paper will*, *in this paper I will*, in *the article*, *in the essay*, etc.
* Do not use pretentious words intended to impress readers. If you use words your reader might not know, explain them. Example: *utilize* should be *use*. Other examples: *plethora, elicit, ensue, illustrative, empowerment*.
* Never use words that seem uncertain: *could, might, may, maybe, probably*, etc.
* Use *THAT* and *WHICH* correctly.
* Possessive nouns
* – use apostrophes properly for singular and plural possessive noun forms.
* Do not use scenarios, anecdotes, or other examples to illustrate points. This is a research paper, not a creative writing assignment.
* Do not use passive voice in your writing. Be concise and clear. Passive voice makes the sentence too wordy.
* Use active voice, clear, precise, and concise sentences.

***Writing resources website***

[Writing Resources (http://elearning.homestead.com/writing)](file:///C:\Users\User\Documents\problems%20of%20Arab%20students%20in%20writing\The%20last%20version%20that%20Meridith%20sent\Writing%20Resources%20(http:\elearning.homestead.com\writing))

(Grammar, spelling, sentence, and paragraph structure, how to write essays, etc.).

* **Paragraphs**: See writing effective paragraphs for help. Make sure your discussion postings and responses are in block style (single spaced, no first line indention, skip one line between paragraphs).
* **Pronouns**: Work that includes too many of the following: he, she, it, they, etc. indicates not enough time spent on the writing to clarify pronoun reference. See pronoun agreement and pronoun reference for additional information.
* **Subject/verb agreement**: Check to make sure that your tenses don't shift from the present to the past tense. Be consistent. Also be sure that your subjects and verbs agree. See subject-verb agreement for help.
* **Spelling**: If you have a computer with a spell checker, use it! Even if you have a spell-checker, have another person read your essay for small errors. You might have entered an incorrect spelling in your spell checker! Also, see commonly confused words for additional help.
* **Commas**: See commas for all the comma usage rules.
* **Sentence structure**: Read your work aloud to ensure proper sentence structure. See Sentence Punctuation Patterns, Sentence Structure, Sentences: Run-ons, and Comma Splices, and Sentences: Fragments
* Parallelism: Sentences that are not parallel can be confusing so that the meaning of your writing is not clear. See parallelism
* **Apostrophes**: This is another indication of rushing through your work. Proofread for singular and plural possessives. See using apostrophes to show possession.
* Dangling modifiers: If these are in your writing, you definitely did not proofread. See modifiers.
* **First and second-person point of view**: Using these indicates that you have not taken time to proofread and revise to demonstrate objectivity in your work. This is not about you; it is about learning and expressing knowledge of of the topics. In your responses, you may use first person point of view only when you are relating course concepts to personal experience.

***Point of view***

No first and second-person points-of-view (e.g., I, you, we) are used in academic writing. Always write from third person point-of-view. Third-person points-of-view (e.g., he, she, it, and they) should not be used unless writing a reflective paper.

**Verb/Subject Agreement**: main verbs agree with the subject in person and number.

**Verb Tense**: writing does not shift inappropriately back and forth from present to past.

**Noun Plurals**: regular plurals ending in "s" and irregular plurals.

**Articles**: articles should be properly place ("a," "an," and "the")

**Punctuation**: Commas, semi-colons, colons; ending punctuation INSIDE quotation marks

**Pronoun Reference**: every pronoun has a clear referent; do not use "he," she," "they," etc. more than twice per paragraph.

**Vague Pronouns**: Make sure that pronouns such as "it" and "this" refer to something specific.

* In the report it suggests that moderate exercise is better than no exercise at all. X
* The report suggests that moderate exercise is better than no exercise at all. OK
* The group wanted to meet in January, but this didn't happen until May. X
* The group wanted to meet in January, but the conference didn't take place until May. OK

**PRONOUNS SHOULD BE REPLACED WITH PRECISE NOUNS** to improve clarity. Use precise language. Avoid “it.” "You" and other personal pronouns are never used in an academic report. "This" and "these" need a noun referent for clarity. "One" is generally a formal and acceptable pronoun.

**Modifiers**: A word or phrase describing something.

**Make sure the modifier clearly refers to the element you want it to modify.**

* The council advises physicians at regular intervals to administer the drug. X
* The council advises physicians to administer the drug at regular intervals. OK
* At regular intervals, the council advises physicians to administer the drug. OK

**Make sure that a modifying phrase or clause has something to modify.**

* By manipulating the lower back, the pain was greatly eased. (X–implies the pain was doing the manipulating)
* By manipulating the lower back, the therapist greatly eased the pain. OK
* When not going to school, my hobbies range from athletics to automobiles. (X--implies the hobbies go to school)
* When I am not going to school, my hobbies range from athletics to automobiles. OK

**Parallelism (Examples)**

* Boy Scouts at the camp can learn cooking, canoeing, swimming, or how to make ropes. X
* Boy Scouts at the camp can learn cooking, canoeing, swimming, or rope-making. OK
* I enjoy biking and to walk down by the pier. X
* I enjoy biking and walking down by the pier. OK
* Non-traditional students often study long hours, get limited sleep, and up again with the sunrise. X
* Non-traditional students often study long hours, get limited sleep, and are up again with the sunrise. OK

**Using *that* and *who***

In academic writing, *that* refers only to **things** and *who* (or its forms *whom* and *whose*) refers only to **people**.

**Examples:**

These are the books that I need for the class.

He is the man who will be teaching the class.

**Use *it,* *they*, and *you* carefully**

* In Chapter four of my autobiography it says that I was born out of wedlock. X
* Chapter four of my autobiography states that I was born out of wedlock. OK
* In the restaurant they gave me someone else's linguini. X
* In the restaurant, the server gave me someone else's linguini. OK
* In the fourteenth century, you had to struggle to survive. X
* In the fourteenth century, English peasant farmers had to struggle to survive. OK

**Antecedent Agreement**

The **antecedent** of a pronoun is the word which the pronoun stands for. In the first sentence on this page the pronoun **which** is taking the place of **word**. Therefore, **word** is the antecedent.

* Every student must have their pencils. X

(Both **every** and **student** are singular; therefore, **his**, **her**, or **his or her** must be used. **Their** is plural and cannot refer to a singular noun.)

* Every student must have his or her pencil. OK
* I never go to that place because they have stale bread. X

(What does ***they*** refer to? Both ***I*** and ***place*** are singular.)

* I never go to that place because it has stale bread. OK
* He ought to speak French well. He lived there for twenty years. X
* He ought to speak French well. He lived in France for twenty years. OK
* The suitcase was on the plane, but now it’s gone. X

(What is gone? The suitcase or the plane?)

* The suitcase was on the plane, but now the suitcase is gone. OK

OR

* The suitcase was on the plane, but now the plane is gone. OK

(Depends on which you mean...)

**Punctuation**: Use a semicolon as well as a conjunctive adverb to join two independent clauses.

* Much of the literature advocates stretching preparatory to exercise, however, the mechanisms are not well understood. X
* Much of the literature advocates stretching preparatory to exercise; however, the mechanisms are not well understood. OK

***These are the most common conjunctive adverbs:***

however

therefore

then

therefore

nevertheless

accordingly

as a result

moreover

even so

rather

indeed

for example

**Comma, Semi-Colon, Colon**

***a. Use a comma after each item in a series of three or more.***

* Many studies indicate favourable results in function, decreased pain and range of motion. X
* Many studies indicate favourable results in function, decreased pain, and range of motion. OK

***b.******Use a comma when you join independent clauses with one of the seven coordinating conjunctions (and, or, nor, but, so, yet, for).***

* Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. X
* Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. OK

***c. Use a semicolon when you join independent clauses without a coordinating conjunction.***

• Power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely. OK

• Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely. BETTER

***d. Do not use a comma to separate subject and verb.***

* His enthusiasm for the subject and his desire to be of help, led him to volunteer. X
* His enthusiasm for the subject and his desire to be of help led him to volunteer. OK

***e. Use a colon*** after a complete statement in order to introduce one or more directly related ideas, such as a series of directions, a list, or a quotation or other comment illustrating or explaining the statement.

* The daily newspaper contains four sections: news, sports, entertainment, and classified ads.

**WORDINESS**

**• Omit the filler phrases "it is," "there is," and "there are" at the beginning of sentences; these often delay the sentence's true subject and verb.**

It is expensive to upgrade computer systems. X

Upgrading computer systems is expensive. OK

**• Omit "this" from the beginning of a sentence by joining it to the preceding sentence with a comma.**

Chlorofluorocarbons have been banned from aerosols. This has lessened the ozone layer's depletion. X

Chlorofluorocarbons have been banned from aerosols, lessening the ozone layer's depletion. OK

**• Change "which" or "that" constructions to an "-ing" word.**

The committee, which meets monthly, oversees accounting procedures and audits. X

The committee, meeting monthly, oversees accounting procedures and audits. OK

**• Omit "which" or "that" altogether when possible.**

Because the fluid, which was brown and poisonous, was dumped into the river, the company that was negligent had to shut down. X

Because the brown, poisonous fluid was dumped into the river, the negligent company had to shut down. OK

• **Replace passive verbs with active verbs. In passive constructions, the subject of the sentence is being acted upon; in active constructions, the subject is the actor**.

Rain forests are being destroyed by uncontrolled logging. X

Uncontrolled logging is destroying rain forests. OK

**• Change "*is*" or "*was*" when they occur alone to a strong verb.**

A new fire curtain is necessary for the stage. X

The stage needs a new fire curtain. OK

**• Replace "*is*," "*are*," "*was*," "*were*," or "*hav*e + an “*-ing word*” to a simple present or past tense verb.**

The South African government was undergoing significant changes. X

The South African government underwent significant changes. OK

• Replace “*should*,” “*would*,” or “*could*” with strong verbs.

The environmental council could see several solutions. X

The environmental council saw several solutions. OK

• Substitute strong verbs for "*-tion*" and "-*sion*" words whenever possible.

I submitted an application for the job. X

I applied for the job. OK

**Redundant Pairs**: Many pairs of words imply each other. *Finish* implies *complete*, so the phrase *completely finish* is redundant in most cases. So are many other pairs of words:

past memories

various differences

each individual

basic fundamentals

true facts

important essentials

future plans

terrible tragedy

end result

final outcome

free gift

past history

unexpected surprise

sudden crisis

very unique

large in size

often times

of a bright color

heavy in weight

period in time

round in shape

at an early time

economics field

of cheap quality

honest in character

of an uncertain condition

in a confused state

unusual in nature

extreme in degree

of a strange type

* Before the travel agent was completely able to finish explaining the various differences among all of the many very unique vacation packages his travel agency was offering, the customer changed her future plans. X
* Before the travel agent finished explaining the differences among the unique vacation packages his travel agency was offering, the customer changed her plans. OK
* During that time period, many car buyers preferred cars that were pink in color and shiny in appearance. The microscope revealed a group of organisms that were round in shape and peculiar in nature. X
* During that period, many car buyers preferred pink, shiny cars. The microscope revealed a group of peculiar, round organisms. OK

**From:**

*http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/general/gl\_concise.html*

[*http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/grammar/grammarcondensed.html*](http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/grammar/grammarcondensed.html)

*Appendix 9*

**26/1/2022**

**The final exam**

**מיומנות בכתיבה "1"**

**מועד "א"**

**משך הבחינה: שעה וחצי**

**אין חומר עזר**

**אין שימוש בפלאפונים או מחשבים**

Dear students,

Please choose one topic from the proposed topics and provide **three reasons** to support your topic. To clarify the reasons, please add examples too. It is important to write a paragraph that includes a topic sentence, some supporting details and a conclusion.

1. **Abolishing exams**
2. **Volunteering in social activities**
3. **Having a semester break**

**Evaluation criteria**

Introductory paragraph:

Topic sentence: 5 points

Content & organization 17 points

Conclusion 3 points

Mechanics (grammar, capitalization, and punctuation) 15 points

Good Luck!

*Appendix 10*

***My feedback and comments sent to the students after taking the second quiz.***

Dear students,

I am writing this message to give you my overall feedback to your performance in the last quiz. Some of you did very well. They managed to improve their writing and grades. To improve your writing as a group, please consider the following seriously.

* Please avoid writing long sentences and the excessive use of “and”.
* There is a need to acquaint yourself with the rules of punctuation, especially commas and capitalization. Still, some of you write the initial of the first word in the sentence a small letter.
* I have repeated that many times. Please note that the personal pronoun “I” is never written in a small letter.
* You should also pay attention to margins. English is a left to write language. Therefore, the margins should be set accordingly.
* Many of you, still, don’t indent the first line of the paragraph. You should move five spaces.
* Please pay attention to word choice too.
* Some missed some points because they didn’t provide signals for providing examples.
* Another example and the most important example are subjects of sentences. Therefore, they should be followed by a verb.
* Some of the topic sentences don’t meet the criteria for providing good topic sentences, which are a topic and a comment.
* Some students missed some points because they didn’t provide a conclusion.
* There is a need to pay more attention to verb tenses. When you write about something happened in the past, you should use the past tense, and when you talk about repeated actions, you should use the present tense.

Good luck,

RA