Case study

A case study: Investigating writing problems of English students at Benghazi University

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Abstract

The study emphasizes an effort made to analyse the composing writing skills and practices of students at Benghazi University majoring in English. The study assumes that only through investigating the writing processes can we start to assess the suitability of the adopted teaching techniques. The key objective of this study is to recognise the problems students face within the writing procedure while focusing on essay and paragraph writing. The study also discusses some of the problems encountered by students, namely, sentence connectors, order of words, used mechanics, prepositions, lexical selection, cohesion, articles, and pronouns, etc. Data for this study included a mid-term exam, an assignment, and a questionnaire. The results of this study offer important teaching implications for second language writing pedagogy as well as for course design. Recommendations are offered to help improve students' writing performance.

Keywords: Writing problems, process writing, grammar mistakes, mechanical mistakes.

Introduction

Learning a language does not only involve gaining knowledge about grammar and the pronunciation systems; it is a skill or a set of skills. Commonly, we speak of four skills There are four skills in learning languages, these are reading and listening that are categorized under the receptive skills, and the second category is the productive skill which includes writing and speaking[1]. However, since many students prefer speaking English to writing, the writing skill gets rather overlooked in our schools. This seems to affect students' writing ability once they decide to join the Department of English at Benghazi University.

Researchers still feel it is necessary to investigate these features of writing progressions which are observable to shed light on many of the difficulties faced while developing a written text. This is a task which for many is a startlingly difficult one of "putting together form and content of language to achieve extended sequences of text that are coherent"[2]. Hence, it is of vital importance to generate an awareness of the function and nature of writing as an essential skill when learning a second language, so teachers and learners can accomplish their roles successfully, in the writing classroom.

Study Objectives: The study tries to analyse the writing ability of learners studying English at Benghazi University, in order to determine the common issues faced by students in their writing procedure, while focusing on essay and paragraph writing. The study will also shed light on the importance of writing as a skill

in pedagogy and to suggest certain teaching implications. The argument of this study is centred on the hypotheses that students who are learning English as their second language are not capable of expressing their ideas through writing and may not be aware of all the intrinsic techniques involved in the process. This leads to various problems and difficulties which students encounter when writing. Students also have difficulty in using sentence connectors (transitions) and punctuation marks to create a unified and coherent paragraph or essay.

Teaching techniques: Many approaches are used to teach writing. It is worth pointing out that it is not possible to follow one approach, because most of them overlap[3]. Thus, instructors should adopt a selective approach and use techniques from the different approaches, which are appropriate for the situation at hand. Several approaches are used in teaching writing such as the audio-lingual, the copybook, the communication, the grammar-syntax organization, and the process approaches.

Writing during the 60's was associated with the model-based approach, which encouraged students to reproduce a model text. However, researchers in the seventies and eighties argued that the final product does not reveal how the writer accomplished the product. White and Arndt indicated that the differences between a product cantered approach and a process focused one is that the final outcome of writing is not preconceived[5].

In addition, a critical result to arise from research is related the fact that writing is about having various stages of ideas development, plan, write, assess, and rewrite, rather than being a

linear process to generate information, outline, and then write[6]. Raimes argues that the process of writers is not a linear one but more of a recursive one. Hence, it can be classified as a cyclical procedure where writers move back and forth examining, synthesising, and exploring ideas[7].

Furthermore, the attention of researchers on composition has shifted nowadays. Rather than investigating what is written by students, researchers and teachers have been exploring the process of composition. The idea of understanding how writing is developed is more important than the idea of knowing how to teach writing[8]. The writing process in initial and second language learning has developed out of research. Analysing how writers write and identifying the writing procedure and should be opposite to the concluding product. This led to the criticism the model-based approach faced which advocated mimicking a model text to reinforce a structure[6].

Background to the problem: Kaplan's study proved that learners of ESL tend to express themselves by using the rhetorical organizational patterns of their own culture[9]. Thus, one might assume that Arab learners of ESL trying to express themselves in English would resort to the rhetorical organization of their mother tongue. In order to identify the problems facing those studying English at the University of Benghazi, a questionnaire was distributed among third year students. Moreover, written short essays were analysed and a written assignment was requested. A major complaint was that students do not know how to arrange and connect their ideas in English. Grammatical errors were another big problem confronting students, mainly tense and subject-verb agreement.

Methodology

In line with the different approaches adopted in the latest research writings, this study applied a case study method which urges the communication of new insights in teaching writing to teachers and this allows a shared effort between the teacher, researcher, and learner. Three sources will be done to obtain the required information: a questionnaire, an assignment, and a mid-term test. The assessment of information about their writing ability is of great importance to gather information about their writing proficiency. Tests, as a device for diagnosing learners' errors and for defining the inter language of individuals and group of learners are indispensable[10].

Collection of data: The subjects of the study were third-year students at Benghazi University. The sample consisted of 40 mid-term exams, but five of them were not considered because the students did not answer the essay question. So only 35 essays were collected from mid-term exams and a separate writing assignment was administered by the investigator. The mid-term examination required each student to develop an outline to select a specific topic and then write five paragraphs in the form of an essay. The topics were about cars, planes, crime, and space. The other writing assignment required was to write a personal letter to a friend.

The questionnaire was administered to specify the needs and expectations of the learners. It also aimed at identifying the main problems students feel they have in the writing process. Moreover, the questionnaire answered a vital question, i.e., are students actually interested in writing, and whether they are motivated. The questionnaire comprised of 21 questions, all of which were of closed type questions, which required the students to choose one of the given alternatives. However, the last question asked the students to provide a brief explanation and state their opinion in writing. The questionnaire survey was given to the 40 third year students and was conducted in a writing course session.

Analysis and interpretation of the questionnaire

Most of the students (93%) affirmed that they enjoyed writing. Only three out of the 40 students indicated their dislike although they were enrolled in a writing course as shown below (Table 1). This indicates that students are highly interested in the writing courses; however, the SD on their mid-term exam 5.9 indicates that they scored poorly. Thus, there seems to be a discrepancy between the students' low grades in the writing course and their motivation to write in English. This finding is reinforced by the analysis of some samples, which indicated the main problems students encountered in the writing process. Furthermore, some instructors commented that some papers deserved lower grades especially as far as the criteria for expected standards of academic writing at the English department.

Almost 83% of the students admitted revising before handing in the assignment as shown in table one. However, the samples examined do not indicate student awareness of revision. Only 17 students admitted they had spelling problems 43%. Yet, the samples showed many spelling errors. Seventeen students indicated they had no problems writing a topic sentence in a paragraph, nearly 43%, the rest 58% had problems as shown in the table below. Moreover, students were satisfied with their ability to organize their ideas. In fact, many of the students 93% admitted they organized their ideas before writing. Since 93% affirmed their ability to organize their ideas before writing, it seemed strange that 50% admitted they had great difficulty in choosing a topic. Nearly half of the students 55% confirmed that they had no problems using sentence connectors.

On the other hand, 65% of the students stated that they had difficulty in achieving unity in a paragraph. While the great majority 78% admitted they shifted from one idea to another, and only nine students were confident in their writing abilities. Regarding punctuation, all students 100% affirmed its importance in organizing a paragraph. However, 65% of the students admitted that they had problems with punctuation, and this was quite evident in the samples analysed. As to their

preferences in reading, 65% of the students affirmed that they read stories, novels, and magazines, as shown in the table below. It is worth mentioning that most of the students 83% do not attend private English lessons, only seven students actually take private lessons. A great number of students indicated that their English improved since they entered the Department of English.

However, when students were asked to assess their abilities, 28% admitted that they were good, 50% stated that they were fair. Only 23% admitted that they were weak. Moreover, 90% of the students wrote their assignments at home, and the remaining students wrote them in class. When asked if they rewrite their assignments, 20% of the students reported once and 32.5% admitted that they rewrite twice. Yet, 48% affirmed that they rewrite more than twice.

It also seems that the majority of students preferred reading more than writing. Eventually, most of the students 63% considered reading more important than writing (38%). As to their preferences in writing 38% reported they preferred letters,

38% of the students liked stories, and only 25% preferred writing diaries.

Finally, the last question in the questionnaire requested students' opinions in writing lessons. Most of the students 60% requested the following: more exercises, more discussion between the instructor and student, homework with correction and discussion of mistakes and classroom activity.

Only one of the students did not find writing interesting and requested "simple ways to write and interesting topics." Another student requested "simplified language from easy to difficult." Almost 13% of the students expressed their need to read more books and to rewrite them. They also requested more personal topics, such as stories and poetry. There were also reports of lack of references and books, and that they needed more access to vocabulary and grammar. It is worth mentioning that one of the students requested translation of terms in Arabic. In conclusion, the questionnaire results indicate that students have problems in writing, and this is quite evident from their responses to the questions.

Table-1: Results of the writing questionnaire (yes/no questions).

Item	Students				
	Options	Yes	%	No	%
1.	Do you like to write in English?	37	93	3	8
2.	Do you revise your writing?	33	83	7	18
3.	Do you have problems with spelling?	17	43	23	58
4.	Do you have a problem writing a topic sentence?	17	43	23	58
5.	Do you organize your ideas before beginning to write?	37	92	3	8
6.	Do you have difficulty choosing a topic?	20	50	20	50
7.	Do you have difficulty using sentence connectors when you write?	18	45	22	55
8.	Do you find unity in the paragraph easy to achieve during the writing process?	26	65	14	35
9.	Do you shift from one idea to another in the writing process?	31	78	9	23
10.	Do you think punctuation is important in organizing a paragraph?	40	100	0	0
11.	Do you have problems with punctuation when writing?	26	65	14	35
12.	Do you read stories, novels or even magazines?	26	65	14	35
13.	Do you attend English lessons at a private school, too?	7	18	33	83
14.	Has your ability to express ideas in written English improved since you started university?	35	88	5	13

Problems in learning writing: Writing for most students is a difficult task to learn and also be creative in writing. Students throughout their education are confronted with different approaches and techniques during their writing lessons. They also face different problems at different stages of writing. Most students do not only have difficulty with spelling and pronouncing words correctly, but also grammatical problems such as the correct usage of tenses, articles, prepositions, etc.

Nevertheless, there are certain problems they usually face. The first of these is writing sentences to create discourse which involves ordering and linking sentences. The second one is related to finding context. Thus, when students start writing they realize that they can hardly express themselves and are at a loss of ideas. Moreover, vocabulary is another difficulty they face. Even if they have ideas, they cannot find the exact words. Hence, writing becomes a greater problem for students, especially when they are required to write an essay in a limited time.

Furthermore, writing is considered as an active skill and students must learn it at an early stage. In secondary schools, each teacher has adopted his/her own technique and has used them for years; sentence combining, forming paragraphs by answering questions or writing similar paragraphs by changing the subject. Consequently, some students enter the university without any knowledge of paragraph writing.

The previous leads to an important question which has been greatly observed universally "why are students reluctant to write?" It is obvious that most students learning English are reluctant to write because of the following factors: i. The writing skill is not like the speaking skill which comes naturally to learners.Most students fail even to write in their first language. Thus, when the task involves English, it is sometimes impossible for the average student. ii. The natural environment for writing is an essential factor; writers require a nice, quiet, comfortable place in which to write. iii. Knowing that they must be cautious not to make grammatical mistakes, which could affect their scores, also impedes students from performing well.

Analysis of mid-term exam and interpretations of results: The mid-term exam requested the students to choose one of the following topics: crimes; space; cars and planes. They were asked to prepare an outline and to use the organization development that is based on five paragraphs that consists of an introduction, followed by a body, and a conclusion. The selection of the essays adopted in the study was done through following various criteria. Initially, third year students were chosen since they have past experience in writing courses. Second, essays that contained a variety of representative errors made by ESL students were chosen.

Identification and classification of errors: The thirty-five essays were analysed following a list of errors categorized according to the most common errors among ESL students used

by Santos[11]. The faults in allessays were categorized according to the classification adopted by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman[12]. The common errors were classified into redundant form, redundant word, omission, or use of a wrong form. It is worth mentioning that the classification of errors sometimes can be considered an interpretation and individual judgement.

The outline requested in the exam was a topic outline, however; several of the students were confused between a topic outline and a sentence outline. Only fifteen of the students 43% constructed the required topic outline. Sixteen of the students 46% prepared a sentence outline, which was not required.

Moreover, four of the students did not write an outline altogether, and twenty-two of them constructed their outlines incorrectly. Only nine of the students were able to accomplish an acceptable outline.

In addition, some students had problems with the thesis statement. Seventeen of the students 49% failed to write their thesis statement. It should be indicated, that twenty-nine of the thirty-one students who wrote their outlines did not state their thesis statement in their outlines, instead they just wrote (*B. Thesis statement*). This surely shows the confusion students confront in developing their outlines and stating their thesis statement. Students were not so confident in the process of outlining, since six students prepared two outlines. This is an indication of the anxiety, and fears the students confronted and the feeling of uneasiness that they may be wrong.

Every essay needs a title, its purpose is to attract the reader, however, thirteen students 37% did not write the title of their essays. It was noted that only nine students wrote the standard five paragraph essay. The rest of the essays ranged from four paragraphs to two and some only one paragraph.

Most of the paragraphs 60% were not indented and well-organized paragraphs. In addition, students seemed to have problems developing their topic sentences in the paragraphs. Twenty-two of the students 63% failed to construct their topic sentences, but thirteen 37% managed to develop a topic sentence.

Table-2 presents the analysis of the mid-term essays regarding its development, namely, developing an outline, developing a topic sentence, and stating a thesis statement.

The picture that emerged from this analysis was that it is quite simple for students to pass from L1 learning to L2. In L1 students are not required to write an outline and there are not so many rigid rules in Arabic writing as in English. A high number of students, 58% admitted that they had no problems writing a topic sentence, yet 63% failed to do so.

The essays also shed light on many problems encountered by students during the writing process, Table three represents a list

of the most frequent errors among ESL learners. The errors were calculated by indicating the number of students who erred in each category, and not on the frequency of errors committed. However, some students may have committed the same error several times.

Table-2: Analysis of the mid-term exam.

Percentage		
Students' development of the essay	Yes	No
Constructed an outline	89 %	11 %
Required topic outline	43 %	57 %
Not required sentence outline	46 %	54 %
Constructed two outlines	17 %	83 %
Developed a topic sentence	37 %	63 %
Developed a thesis statement	51 %	49 %
Title of essay	63 %	37 %

Table-3: Classification of errors in the mid-term exam following (Santos, 1988)

Error category	Number of students	Percentage
Articles	27	77 %
Discourse cohesion	18	51 %
Fragment	22	63 %
Lexical choice	26	74 %
Sentence connectors	17	48 %
Nonreferential *It and There*	13	37%
Mechanics	32	91 %
Prepositions	28	80%
Word order	16	46 %
Pronouns	14	40 %
Singular/plural	17	48 %
Verb-Agreement	24	68 %
Auxiliary	21	60 %
Omission	16	45 %
Tense/aspect	33	94 %

Analysis of the assignment (letters): The assignment requested by the same third-year students was a personal letter to a friend. Forty of the students returned the assignment. Only sixteen of the letters were written in the correct letter format. After analysing the letters using the same classification of the essays, many errors were identified, and percentages were calculated as in Table-4.

Table-4: Classification of errors in the assignments (letters).

Error category	Number of Students	Percentage
Articles	15	38 %
Fragment	16	40%
Sentence connectors	28	70%
Nonreferential *It / There*	8	20%
Lexical choice	20	50%
Mechanics	32	80%
Prepositions	31	78%
Word order	11	28%
Pronouns	20	50%
singular/plural	10	25%
Verbs Agreement	4	10%
Auxiliary	7	18%
Omission	12	30%
Tense/aspect	29	73%

Discussion of the results of the assignment: During the analysis of the letters, it was quite evident that the students' performance was much better. Although there were errors in all categories, they were much less in number than the mid-term essays. One of the reasons could be attributed to the fact that they were not performing under timed test conditions. Another reasonwas the knowledge that this assignment was not going to be graded. Thus, students were free to express themselves without inhibition, fear of grades and criticism. This shows how familiarity with the topic plays a crucial role in writing. It could be that some topics were more cognitively demanding and required abstract reasoning rather than more personal experiences and this could lead to differences in scores and errors.

The analysis of the letters also revealed the tendency of students to use simple sentences and no use of any complex sentences.

Most of the vocabulary used was easy and usually used by students in everyday conversation. Thus, the spelling mistakes were not as many as the ones found in the essays written by the same students. The below sections will deal with pedagogical and teaching implications to find solutions to writing problems.

Pedagogical and teaching implications: This study raises serious questions regarding many predominating classroom practices and the need for alternative models of teaching. It is worth mentioning that students were given some methods of instructions that involve limited and narrow concepts and ideas related to writing and its true functions. For instance, precedence became more important than meaning because students think that the writing is done in order to allow the instructor to examine them. Students then supposed that writing was completed as a response to their homework, assignments, and tests that were examined by the instructor. Students arrived to writing classes full of anxiety and nervousness about writing classes, and regarding their capability in writing because of the earlier instructors that placed these students in a short-sighted notion about proper writing, and how they can improve. Thus, it is necessary try to abandon old methods and prospects to change the current role attitude of students into a new form. That is why teachers should adopt the selective approach and use different techniques from the different approaches.

Students have to take a break from a series of continuous instruction that preserves weak students from creating development by strengthening counterproductive mechanical representations of writing. Instructors need to permit students to practice the procedure of noticing and expressing what they would like to write[8]. Zamel also argues that learning methods that value the writing as a step towards completing other separate missions and tasks, starting with a specific thesis statement, and an outline sentence for the topic before even starting to brainstorm any ideas, can be unsuitable for English language learners[8]. Raimes indicated that we must understand the characteristics of students to be writers and focus more on the linguistic code part that should be well acquired[7].

Students must be given the ability to investigate their thoughts and opinions with reference to engaging topics and use them in the most successful way to communicate their ideas[13].Zamel adds that instead of requesting students to develop neat outlines, they should be asked to work on tentative and preliminary notes and lists.

This study urges the need to propose a newer model for teaching a second language. Raimes explains the model should be used for emphasizing writing, that indicates the significance of writing for creating language, and that writing should not be seen as a way of learning language skills, but could be considered an efficient practice for developing words, paragraphs, and better way of communicating them into a new language[7].

The Writing Process: One of the important approaches for teaching writing is the writing process. ESL students have to enhance their own capabilities that have a direct influence on the content such as the support, development, and organization of their argument and ideas, and such areas must gain most of the attention provided within the process approach which views all writing as creative. Process writing is quite recursive which entails evaluating, re-viewing, and drafting[5].

Vocabulary: Vocabulary has been considered the neglected element in the courses of writing. Consequently, the findings of the study demonstrated that such area must gain more and closer attention. Santos argues that some instructors even though they usually do not accept any linguistic mistakes, the instructor would yet evaluate the language and the context independently, to a specific extent that is applicable[11]. Nevertheless, this is not the case with lexical mistakes. The content in this case is directly affected due to such errors because if the incorrect word is mentioned, then the meaning will eventually be different and obscured. This was evident in the essays, since one of the students did not understand what was meant by 'space', and thought it meant 'Satellite TV'. Unfortunately, the student scored a zero for a vocabulary error.

Furthermore, Raimes stated that the attainment of a proper vocabulary may not directly indicate the ability to write. If a student is given a sufficient time, shown methods of exploring topics, and provided with sufficient feedback, they will be able to determine and discover the required English words when writing.

Hence, the ESL course of writing should include the lexical selection, and some units about developing the vocabulary of students. Santos recommends that such goal can be achieved in multiple ways: the adoption of some vocabulary exercises, for instance, word form practices, encourage students to have a vocabulary memorandum during their lectures and readings, and the significance of lexical choice, and the induction or demonstration of expressions and forms[11].

Developing reference skills is very important for students starting to learn English. Thus, any activity that aids in enhancing the referencing skills of students can also be quite useful in developing their new vocabulary, how to deal with it, and suggest putting the words in a 'spidergram', which might contain all new words. As a result, students can reveal the different means of maintaining their own vocabulary records[1].

Grammar and error correction: Grammar is not only a set of rules, but it is a tool and an understanding of how language works. However, White and Arndtaffirm the importance of grammar, but as an instrument, a process, and not an end in itself[5]. Nevertheless, grammar is extremely significant, and students tend to focus on grammar just for the sake of their communication experiences and needs[14]. Hence, it is critical to avoid ignoring grammar, but at the same time it cannot be

relegated to students through handbooks and refer them to specific page numbers[15]. Understanding and learning the vocabulary and syntax of a new language is essential for ensuring the ability of students to write. Nevertheless, the conclusions of this study concluded that learners had huge problems with the simplest forms of grammar. Some of them struggled to construct simple sentences and this is alarming, since these students are in their third year. Thus, it is important to revise the techniques used in teaching grammar.

It is worth mentioning that the correction of mistakes in L2 writing is a major concern for composition theorists, writing teachers, and researchers[16]. In fact, instructors know that students are more concerned with their writing accuracy and that their errors are actually troublesome. Hence, it is a challenging procedure to respond efficiently to the lexical errors and grammatical mistakes of students. Khalil argues that meanwhilemistakes are an unavoidable portion of learning a second language, educators confront the difficult question of whether or not to correct them, then which types of errors are most worthy of attention and correction[17]. There is an agreement that improper correction of errors may not aid students in their writing and could be a misleading sign. There are many studies and research that indicated the significance of efficient correction of errors especially the selective ones to aid students in their writing.

On the other hand, Truscott argues that in courses designed for second language, grammar is considered as an institution. He also stated that almost all L2 instructors of writing achieve in a certain way or another, and those who wrote about it also suggest the need to do it anyway[18]. If a teacher determines a specific error, they could not be able to understand the right use of the word, some questions with grammar might be extremely difficult, and even experts may find it difficult[18]. Therefore, patience and time are major problems faced by busy teachers that are responsible for grading many works and written assignments. In fact, leaving errors uncorrected will only lead to fossilization. The importance of grammar and error correction in writing is of great importance. The only way a student can learn to write grammatically is through practicing, and really enjoying the writing process. Students that are developing their learning skills are not gaining from confused instructor rewording and varying correction of errors. The best way forward would be one-to-one conferencing and using feedback to focus on the needs of writers to boost vocabulary and syntax as they proceed to write.

Course design: Course design should usually contain practice and information with multiple strategies including the proper management of questions and texts, and how to develop new ideas that related to a new topic. Moreover, there should be a practice for new ideas, and how to take into account all options before generating a plan on how to organize these ideas. In some cases, students tend to depend on processes, but the developed strategies are not usually operative. Students

sometimes tend to create a plan, they go through the questions numerous times, and they review the text trying to find any mistakes. Nevertheless, this is usually done in a randomized process.

Hence, it is of vital importance to design a specific course for writing syllabus according to the needs of learners and on the theoretic notion that emphasizes the integration between process and product-oriented techniques. The objectives are the following: i. to determine the major linguistic needs of students, learning methods, and their writing habits. ii. to implement a placement test to evaluate the proficiency level of students enrolling in the English department. iii. to make use of remedial non-credit courses to prepare weak students for required courses in the English department. iv. to develop content suitable for writing courses for English language students. v. to provide processes for evaluation and examination.

Thus, a third-year syllabus should concentrate more on learners working in an atmosphere where they can monitor their own learning, develop lexis and syntax, and also develop writing skills. It is necessary to stress in the syllabus raising awareness on the audience, coherence, significance of reading, and generating skills for writing including synthesizing, summarizing, paraphrasing, reporting, and arguing. Other points needed are implementation of approaches, for instance, developing several drafts and revision. Students must be encouraged to focus on critical evaluation. peer feedback and the significance of attending conferencing classes with their supervisor or lecturer. It is of vital importance for students to be provided with all psychological and cognitive help and needs from their lecturer. This writing syllabus may be able to facilitate the learner's learning achievement, and give them enough practice in composing, so that they become more confident writers.

The role of the topic in writing: Students are asked to produce a composed topic that can aid in making a huge difference in terms of writing quality, but in regards of research area of the topic is profoundly lacking[19]. This evokes the concerns regarding the importance of being familiar with the topic and its content. It could be that some topics are more cognitively demanding and require abstract reasoning rather than more personal experience, and this could lead to the difference in scores.

Conclusion

A tentative conclusion has been reached in the findings of this study regarding the mentioned hypotheses at the start, at least regarding the groups of students who participated in the study. The samples analysed demonstrated that students faced several problems including language structure and organizational problems. Moreover, few of them had lack of any organizational and analytical skills. For example, students who started doing their outline found themselves not following it. Issues related to

surface structure has to be properly balanced while ensuring the efficiency of expressing and organizing ideas. Students who are able to follow comprehensively the given instructions for developing a good form and structure are able to adequately express their ideas.

The study also shows that students were more concerned with getting ideas written than with writing without errors. These results specify that we ought to revise the pedagogical approaches used. However, many of the areas touched in this thesis require extensive research before a new model of teaching should be implemented.

There were also studies conducted on writing which proved that students still encounter problems in writing. In a study conducted by Hewaydion students' assignments writing during their second and third years in the English department at the University of Benghazi to demonstrate the major issues encountered by students while developing their composition of coherence and cohesion, especially in essay and paragraph stages. The study demonstrated that, even though student's ideas were quite stable, they tend to express them in a poor sequence[20].

In another research, Libadi tried to comprehend the knowledge of student's especially regarding the implementation and usage of punctuation marks such as using parentheses, question marks, exclamation marks, commas, and others. The reached findings indicated that most students who were involved in this study had poor understanding of sentences meaning in English especially when they changed the used punctuation marks and had lack of accuracy of when to use these marks[21].

Almazaini investigated the organizational issues that are encountered by students in their English essay writing studying in the Faculty of Education at the University of Benghazi. The aim of the study was to determine the issues faced by students when writing including the style, cohesive devices, language, and mechanism. The collected information showed that there are several problems faced by students including grammar and spelling[22].

To conclude, this case study gives insight into some effective approaches that could be employed. Process techniques are much efficient as a technique for student's motivation to keep on practicing their writing in order to enhance their attitude and understand teaching writing skills. It also emphasises the need to re-examine and identify approaches used in writing courses at the English Language Department. It is worth mentioning, that most recent approaches have stressed the point that the promotion of language learning is optimistic when it is learned for communication and for purposes, when accuracy of language is there to serve a subordinate and fluency of linguistic, and for its true means of expression.

Recommendations: Recommendations are needed to help in improving students' writing skills. For example, advanced academic writing indicates the need for an explicit instruction. If students are to benefit from what is known about expectations for L2 writing, it is mandatory on curriculum designers and teachers to address learners' language needs accordingly. Another point is writing assessment. There is numerous research that focused on the subject of writing amount. It is of vital importance to identify what typifies decent writing. Since writing is a complex activity, judging students' writing texts is a difficult process. In the essays, we perceive the students' grammatical abilities, their understanding of what happening in the world around them, their control and knowledge of words, their factual knowledge of topics, and their sense of unified subjects. Thus, it is very important for the English Language Department to provide a certain criterion regarding the rating of essays, whether it is a holistic scoring system, a multiple trait assessment, or analytical scoring.

Class size is also an important aspect of learning ESL writing. Classes in writing should be limited to no more than twenty to facilitate writing, reading of papers, discussion of written work, and implementing one-on-one conferences. Conferencing as an interactive way to teach writing is also important in language learning. Since feedback notes can be extremely complex for ESL students to act and comprehend them, Zamel suggests that educators and learners can have face to face meetings to have a better live exchange[23]. Furthermore, in order to decrease the anxiety of students', determine the sources of the problem, and then adopt strategies for enhancing language learning, teachers can apply one-on-one discussions.

Moreover, it would also be of great benefit if the English composition at the tertiary, intermediate, and secondary levels in Libya were conducted with an emphasis on the development of organizational skills. This will hopefully lead to considerable improvement in the written performance of students learning English when enrolling in the English Language Department.

Nowadays, the use of teaching tools such as the Internet has many benefits. Researcher and educators have agreed through a common ground to integrate and combine virtual classrooms with the traditional ones as the change in a paradigm does not usually happen overnight. Students can receive the advantages of both worlds through combining traditional classrooms with some technological elements[24]. Hence, it offers accessibility of timely data and information and the ability to communicate with many users around the world through the internet. Mei Lin Ho mentioned the issues related to modern information technology are also encountered by educators and not only students especially for the case of having innovative classrooms[25].

Furthermore, with the growing importance on assisting students to be more autonomous, the usage of reference books either in class or outside is much more widespread. Reference books such as dictionaries, thesauruses, and grammar books are of

great value in helping students increase their vocabulary, and language structure. In fact, dictionaries not only offer senses of words, but gives info about grammatical guidelines, and pronunciation. It is also crucial to teach students to use dictionaries efficiently. Actions that expand the students' referencing skills might be extremely supportive in enhancing their capabilities to manage newer vocabulary[1]. Gower et al also recommend that many study skills might be simply added to language skill mission, for instance, students might be able to adopt books for grammar reference when they are practicing, or they can use thesaurus and dictionary when writing or reading[1].

Another important point is to encourage students about their awareness of how to improve their writing knowledge and learning. Consciousness-raising techniques form a vital part of teaching writing. Providing an analysis of students' drafts is very useful, as it offers instructors an understanding into the strategies and techniques students are using. Students require the knowledge of strategies to improve their writing and to manage the feedback they receive. Therefore, it is necessary to raise the awareness and provide the opportunities which can stimulate a better understanding of the composing process and help them appreciate the approach. Raising the awareness can be done in many ways such as questionnaires or through notes of many statements where students can debate and approve or reject what is stated.

Free writing is a great opportunity for students to practice writing spontaneously for a sufficient time in each class, normally ten or fifteen minutes. It provides learners a unique and satisfying experience as it can help in avoiding the fear and anxiety which usually impact writing and will strengthen students' perceptions of motivation to write in English[26].

In order to improve students' abilities in writing, it is important to plan placement tests in the English Department. Placement tests identify the proficiency levels of students. It is also of vital importance to introduce non-credit remedial courses. The advantage of remedial courses is preparing students for advanced writing courses. Thus, the English department can introduce courses such as composition and language, essay writing, expository writing, and stylistics.

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