

**PROFESSORS' AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS ENGLISH WRITING
CHALLENGES AT QASSIM UNIVERSITY OF SAUDI ARABIA**

by

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CERTIFICATION OF THESIS/PROJECT CAPSTONE WORK

We, the undersigned, certify that this project entitled PROFESSORS' AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS ENGLISH WRITING CHALLENGES AT QASSIM UNIVERSITY OF SAUDI ARABIA by BADAR ALMUHAILIB, Candidate for the Degree of Master of Science in Education, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), is acceptable in form and content and demonstrates a satisfactory knowledge of the field covered by this project.




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ABSRTACT

This study investigated professors' and students' perceptions toward writing difficulties that Arab English learners would encounter when writing in English. This study applied to students who study in the English department at Qassim University (QU), Saudi Arabia. A survey was distributed to 86 students studying in the English Department in QU. Three of English language professors teaching in the same Department at QU were asked about their beliefs of writing challenges that many students face. The results showed that professors and students held different perceptions toward English writing difficulties that were found reported by the two surveys. Hence, professors should take into consideration the students' perceptions in order to build instructions and curriculum accordingly.

Keywords: writing challenges, Arab English learners, Saudi Arabia

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Introduction

Writing is defined as the ability to compose and express thoughts of a writer (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985). Writing skills are needed in school settings, at the workplaces and within the larger community (Graham & Perin, 2007). Ghorbani, Gangeraj, and Alavi (2013) claimed that writing skills are the most difficult skills to be mastered. Many researchers investigated English language learners' writing skill problems that may hamper their progress while trying to obtain writing proficiency. Although many researchers have conducted studies on how to boost the writing skills of English language learners (ELLs), this study will focus on the professors and students' perceptions of English writing difficulties and explore three themes: writing problems of Arab ELLs, Arab ELLs specific writing skill needs, and enhancing writing strategies.

Problem

The necessary skills for successful writing in English are difficult for any language learner, but it is particularly challenging for native speakers of Arabic. Arabic, unlike European languages, such as Spanish, or French, does not come from the same Proto-European Origins the English language came from. The vast differences in the grammar, syntax, phonology, and so on, make learning English much harder for Arabic students.

Professors should recognize their students' needs and perceptions of English writing challenge to teach them accordingly. The gap between professors and students' perceptions of English writing difficulties leads professors to teach students a content that students may not need at a certain level. The researcher conducted this study on Arab learners who study at the college level.

Arab students faced many difficulties and made some errors when writing in English such as grammatical mistakes (Altaha, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1996; Bagdady, 1994; Ghrib, 2001;

Hassan et al. 1993; Mahmoud, 2002). Paraphrasing, also, is one of the problems that hampers Arab students to write a well-developed paragraph. Another issue is the interference of the first language which in turn affects students writing quality due to the differences in Arabic and English writing styles. Also, lack of communication between students in the English language is one of the problems Arab students face in addition to the weakness of the presented resources, and the curriculum students receive (Rabab'ah, 2001).

In this study, the researcher examined the Arab students' perceptions of the English writing difficulties and their teachers too to find the result of such differences. Also, three professors were asked about their perceptions of English writing difficulties that their students may face when writing in English.

Purpose

This research aimed to examine the difficulties most Arab college students encounter when writing in the English language from the perceptions of both students and professors. This, in turns, would lead to recognizing the professors' awareness of their students' needs in the field to help them to be more familiar with the strategies and skills needed to grow more developed and mature in writing abilities in the English language. This research answered the following raised questions to achieve the primary purposes of conducting it.

1. What challenges do Arab college students face when writing in the English language?
2. What difficulties do teachers believe Arab college students encounter when writing in English?
3. What strategies do teachers use to enhance students' writing?

Significance of the Study

This research explores teachers' and students' perceptions of English writing challenges. Professors of English language would consider this research when teaching Arab students according to the challenge revealed by such research. Since ESL curriculum usually built by experts who teach different English learners, an Arab learner has unique features that one who teaches them should be familiar with. The importance of this research is that the students and their professors had been questioned regarding their perceptions of English writing difficulties in this research. Then, the researcher compared professors and students results to see how much the gap between professors and students' perceptions towards such challenges. The revealed results would also help professors when building English curriculum policy for Arab students to take such challenges into consideration.

Literature Review

Mastering writing is not an easy accomplishment, especially for ELLs (Ghorbani et al., 2013). Further, Arabic ELL's' writing deficiencies affect other courses in addition to English classes (Ismail, Hussin, & Darus, 2012). According to Ghorbani et al. (2013), the writing difficulty resides in how to gather ideas and then how to translate thoughts into understandable texts. As Rokni and Seifi (2013) have claimed, writing is difficult for ELLs because they have to pay attention to many aspects of the language at the same time, such as vocabulary consideration, language utilization, and sentence structure. Writing in a second language is complicated because it requires translation of thoughts in addition to the brainstorming of ideas, multiple drafting, feedback, revision and editing (Maarof & Murat, 2013). In their study investigating students' problems in learning how to write, Ismail et al. (2012) found that students face a lot of difficulties and challenges related to the insufficiency in critical writing thoughts. The researchers further argued that writing is more complex in higher education classes where students are expected to be more professional to represent their academic level.

The following literature review will explore English writing difficulties that ELLs may face when learning English in the EFL setting, with a focus on students in the Arabic-speaking world, specifically English acquisition in the Saudi Arabian context. This is because the investigation will be conducted at Qassim University (QU) in Saudi Arabia. The following paragraphs briefly will provide outlines the literature review of this research.

The first section, Characterization of Academic Writing illustrates the constructions of the academic writing in addition to the Students' Perceptions topic. The second section, Teaching English in Saudi Arabia includes four subheadings: Language Policy in Saudi Arabia, History of Teaching English, Introducing English in Colleges, and Teaching Writing. The third

section is the main part of the literature review where Writing Challenges are discussed in addition to Arab Learners' Specific Challenges such as Article Errors and Spelling errors. The fourth section is about The Effective Strategies for Teaching English Writing. Five strategies have been explored: The Reciprocal Teaching, Cooperative Learning, Reading, Literature-Based Course, and Text-Based Strategies.

Characterization of Academic Writing

As this research was carried out at a university level, investigating various academic writing studies that have been conducted in second language setting is an important part of this study. However, many researchers in this field focus primarily on defining the academic writing and do not touch upon what the components of academic writing are (Al-Badwawi, 2011; Thaiss & Zawacki, 2006) although the opposite should be true. Knowing components of academic writing would help students think more about the significance of the academic writing and lead students to take these into account when they write academically.

Academic writing is defined as the components of skill that are presented and taught at the college level, for example, critical thinking, enhancing vocabulary, creating a new idea, and grammatical syntax (Mustafa, 2013). In this level, the basis of writing developed sentence and organizing paragraph should be introduced to the students. Also, mastering punctuation is very critical at this level too (Montgomery & Baker, 2007). Teachers need to encourage students to be aware of academic writing constructions, for example, the strategies of academic writing, the definition of terms students use, and the difficulties that students may face when writing the higher educational stage. Moreover, Mustafa (2013) pointed that students need to adjust their expectations about their development and mastery level of writing to write a well-developed paragraph.

Li (2007), on the other hand, asserted that writers should handle some beliefs about the enhancement and identification of English as a second language (ESL) in using well-developed lesson plans to teach academic writing. Hence, students would be able to interact culturally expressing their identities through academic writing to adjust their needs.

Although academic writing is an essential skill for students at a university level to achieve success, it is hard to be mastered without sufficient practice. This is because students should be knowledgeable about the subject they are writing about, in addition to the linguistic ability (Al-Badwawi, 2011). Al-Badwawi (2011) argued that even an English native speaker would not be able to master academic writing since it is not a given skill although he or she is loaded with high ability of English language. A native speaker also needs to be exposed to academic writing skill through specialized courses and contexts. In addition to that, students should frequently be exposed to such academic features as well-structured sentences, advanced words, and organized paragraphs with appropriate punctuation marks.

It is important to know that mastering academic writing at the university level is the most significant skill that a student should gain to achieve success at the university level (Krause, 2001; Leki & Carson, 1994; Lillis & Turner, 2001; Zhu, 2004). This is true since a lot of assignments and papers given at colleges are usually attached to writing skills (Al-Badwawi, 2011). Students face difficulties when they move into higher education writing context (Lea & Street 2006, p. 370; Yong, 2010). One reason behind this is that academic writing is not introduced to students until they reach the college level (Giridharan, 2012).

In colleges, students are required to obtain a lot of knowledge regarding their majors. Then they have to present such knowledge through well-organized pieces of writing to show their understanding and ability to write academically. This type of knowledge makes academic

writing necessary at the college stage (Al-Badwawi, 2011). In a study conducted by Cai (2013) on 50 master graduate students, the results have shown that students need academic writing for studying purposes more than other skills. The finding also indicated that students were not provided with courses that focus on academic writing needs.

Student Perceptions

Since this research depends on teachers and student perceptions, exploring the literature review written on these two topics is necessary. It is important to understand students' perceptions in order to teach them academic writing effectively (Lea, 2004; Cabral & Tavares, 2002; Lillis, 2001; Zamel, 1987). Likewise, Lafaye and Tsuda (2002:156) and Hart (1995) asserts on the significance of students' perceptions when teaching writing to ESL students.

Lea and Street (1998) conducted an ethnographic qualitative approach on students and staff including samples of writing, observation, and interviews in order to discover participants' perceptions toward English writing challenges. The findings showed that students encounter difficulties in writing specially with conflicting and contrasting.

One of the students' perceptions about writing in English at the high level stage is anxiety (Blanton, 1987:112; Gambell, 1991:420; Spencer, 2007). Gambell, who investigated students' perceptions toward writing in English, found that even excellent students found writing stressful and uncomfortable. Also, Blanton informed that her students were scared and anxious about their writing. Students think that they may not succeed in exams and would be difficult for them to obtain the degree.

The main three parts of academic writing are solving problems, utilizing suitable approaches, and creating new plans. The student should be aware of these elements to understand

academic writing (Mustafa, 2013). Much research conducted on Arab learner has focused on how to teach academic writing skills and features in addition to the tasks of synthesizing.

Native speakers have the ability to express themselves clearly when writing academic text. They measure self-integration of the learning process and obtain the chances of creating relevant comments to come up with new meaningful ideas when writing (Daoud & Al-Hazmi, 2002). However, non-native speakers should take part in the activities presented in the learning environment to enhance their academic writing accuracy. Developing particular aspects of cultural lineaments leads students to achieve, for example participating in meaningful assignments, respecting of cultural background, and communicative interaction.

Zilora and Hermsen (2007) pointed out that academic writing requires students to contextualize and collect facts to make thoughts connected to each other adequately, and this process requires students to understand the broad knowledge presented in a text. Thus, when students write academically, they have to consider the academic writing components.

Teacher's Belief

Much research has been conducted on teachers' attitudes about student writing ability (Williams, 1971; Li, 2007; Cabral & Tavares, 2002; Gambell, 1987; Harris, 1977). Most of these studies asserted of existing the gap between the students and professors' perceptions. For example, professors expect students to be ready to write and read well at the college level while students imagine that professors would introduce the topics that are not introduced intensively in the public school. Professors have to know students' attitudes and perspectives in order to build learning materials accordingly. Furthermore, when professors need to assign a task, these assignments should be accurate, and students should receive full intention in order to promote learning process (Li, 2007:45). Cabral and Tavares (2002:2) also pointed out that teachers have

present clear ideas, requests, assignments, feedback correction for students to develop their writing skills.

Gambell (1991) conducted research on college lectures expectations about students writing. The results showed that lecturers thought students were not prepared enough to deal with the style of the discipline requirements. Professors were not focusing on the sentence level features or grammar mistakes which, on the other hand, made students worried about grammar accuracy and word choice Leki and Carson (1994:89).

English Language in Saudi Arabia

English Language Policy. According to Payne and Almansour (2014), there are no many studies written on language policy in Saudi Arabia although teaching English in Saudi Arabia is a big issue in the country. English teachers have to solve students' problems tied to language learning, supply materials, and introduce different teaching methodologies in Saudi schools. Teaching another language besides the Arabic language for Saudi students is one of the language policies in Saudi Arabia (Saudi MOE, 2003). Since English is the language of science, business, and technology, Ministry of Education grants students to learn English to obtain the access to such relevant fields. To communicate with the international community through social media and to expand the university admission chances, students learn English in early stages (Almalki, 2014).

TEFL in the Saudi Context. Since Saudi Arabia is undergoing through economic, political, and social changing, teaching English is challenging and can't be separate out of this big picture. So, the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia introduced the English language to continue developing the education system in 1925 (Al-Ahaydib, 1986). It is stunning when you see the recent efforts to update English language teaching and learning practices in Saudi Arabia

seeking quality in education. Yet, Saudi Arabia still a developing country (Liton, 2013).

Recently, teaching English in Saudi Arabia has been modified, specially, regarding curriculum. Ministry of Education assured to build the curriculum on the main four skills (listening, speaking, reading & writing) when the Department of English took the responsibility to design the new English curriculum in 1999 (Liton, 2013). Saudi Education Policy defined the general objectives of Teaching English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabia. Looking to Article number 50 of the Saudi Education Policy, the essential notion of teaching English according to Hajailan (2003, p. 23), "*Furnishing the students with at least one of the living languages, in addition to their original language, to enable them acquire knowledge and sciences to their communities and participate in the spreading of Islam and serving humanity*". He added that following this notion guideline means that students should be aware of the English language value worldwide. By believing in the English language significance, Students would be eager to transfer and share the information loaded by the English language in addition to introduce their own culture and achievements to other nations.

History of English language teaching. Since 1929, English language teaching has been a controversial issue in Saudi Arabia. Alhajailan (2009) claimed that in 1929 English language was presented in Saudi public schools and taught as an official course in the primary stage. Then teaching English was discounted in 1942 for an unclear reason as Alhajailan (2009) stated. Two years later, learning English was introduced again in individual schools that are allocated for students who would travel abroad to study after gaining a scholarship. Then English was generalized to all Saudi schools' system and became one of the most important subjects (Almalki, 2014). At the beginning of 1953, some reforms were introduced to the Saudi Educational System regarding setting rules, and teaching English and French (Alhajailan, 2009).

Beginning in 1943, English was taught in elementary school along with other subjects. Then the General Director decided to start teaching English from the last year of primary stage, 6th grade, in addition to middle and high schools. According to Al-Zaid (1981), until from the mid-1980s, six hours weekly were assigned for teaching the English language to the middle and high school students. Nowadays, English is taught intensively; the Ministry of Education (MOE) mandates four classes a week for middle and high school students. Elementary school students are starting learning English from the 4th grade for a total of two hours a week.

In Saudi Arabia, the Arabic language is the official language and the medium of teaching in some colleges. Earlier, English was not considered as an important subject to be learned and taught. Rather, it was simply a course for students in the middle and high schools who have to take English to pass exams and fulfill the requirements.

Recently, the status of English has taken an influential position since its global need has risen. English has become the language of technology and economy in addition to business and science (Ur-Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). The hope is that teaching the children earlier will have a positive impact on their learning and abilities later in their academic and life careers. Since higher education is based on the foundation received from the public education, the goal of the general education should be studied closely to recognize its role in improving student English language in the early stages of learning. The Ministry of Education (MOE) has listed eight goals for teaching English in Saudi Arabia. Four of these goals relating to teaching the basic language skills, linguistic ability development, and the other four objectives focus on students' awareness of the importance of English language and the culture attached to it (Ur-Rahman, & Alhaisoni, 2013).

Almalki (2014) stated that the Saudi Ministry of Education set the goals listed below regarding teaching English in Saudi schools:

- (1) To develop the students' intellectual, personal and professional abilities.
- (2) To acquire a level of proficiency in language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) that enables them to communicate with speakers of English.
- (3) To acquire the language proficiency necessarily required in various life situations.
- (4) To acquire the linguistic competence required in different professions.
- (5) To develop their awareness of the importance of English as a means of international communication.
- (6) To develop positive attitudes towards learning English.
- (7) To develop the linguistic competence that enables them to be aware of the cultural, economic, and social issues of their society to contribute in giving solutions.
- (8) To develop the linguistic competence that enables them, in the future, to present and explain Islamic concepts and issues, and participate in spreading Islam.

English language development project (ELDP). Since Saudi Arabian educational system has been changing, the English language curriculum is one of the fundamental aspects of this change. Ministry of Education has hired many experts from native English countries. This project has five phases (a) selection, (b) alignment, (c) application, (d) evaluation, and (e) generalization (Tatweer, n.d). Some of the Saudi schools have been recently using a new curriculum called Flying High. The goal of this new curriculum is to enhance the quality of

teaching EFL by focusing on intellectuality, creativity, communicative skills, and learner-centered approach, and to develop critical thinking (Almalki, 2014).

Although enormous efforts have been made to change and reform teaching English language in Saudi Arabia, yet the development of teaching English remain a complicated topic (Branson, 2010). This is because teaching English correspondences with many factors, such as the school, teacher, and environment, etc. (Fullan, 2001). Fullan stated that “theories of education” and the change process “theories of change” (p. 48) count in developing English language teaching and education in general.

Introducing English at the college level. Baghdadi (1985) pointed out that the first college in Saudi Arabia was established in Makkah city in 1949. This college had a department called Islamic Law which presented English as a required course. Two hours a week of English language subject was counted for the whole academic period of study. Eight years later, in 1957, an independent English department at King Saud University offering English courses was established for the first time in Saudi Arabia, followed by the College of Education in Makkah in 1963 (Baghdadi, 1985).

However, in 1973, a significant decision was made by the Ministry of Education regarding the teaching of English language, which required holders of high school diploma to study for one year in an intensive English course. The teachers need to go to Britain to study for two years to be ready to teach the English language to middle and high school students (Conrad, & Rubal, 1996). This action, in turn, helped middle and high school students to receive an excellent education by well-educated English teachers to become proficient in speaking and writing English when they join universities.

Teaching writing. Writing is considered the most difficult skill to be mastered not only for non-native speakers of a targeted language but also for native speakers as well. Thus, focusing on the latest approach to teaching writing and assessing students' needs lead to enhance students writing eventually. In Saudi Arabia, teaching writing still needs to be given much attention to developing students' outcomes.

According to Fageeh (2003), teaching English writing in Saudi Arabia is not given enough time and attention in school settings. Students have not been taught how to organize English writing and have lacked exposure to suitable teaching strategies that emphasize writing skills. The lack of exposing students to appropriate teaching strategies, when teaching Arabic writing skills, leads not only to the weakness of Arab students in Arabic writing but in English writing as well. In fact, this strongly affected the quality of Saudi learners' writing in general (Fageeh, 2003).

Writing Challenges

Many studies have been conducted to examine English writing challenges; however, most of these studies have not been done on Arab English learners. Moreover, most of the studies had done on Arab learners had not taken into consideration variables that would affect writing improvement. Instead, much of the research conducted on writing skills for native speakers of Arabic has investigated specific features of the language (such as grammar, syntax, etc.), rather than explore the factors that affect the acquisition of writing skills (Fageeh, 2003).

For example, a study conducted by Dudley-Evans and Swales (1980) investigated Arab learners' writing linguistic perspectives. The study attempted to determine the pure syntactic difficulties between Arabic and English language by investigating the use of noun phrases, the wide use of the articles, the nominal sentence, tenses, and so on. Another example is a study by

Beeston (1982) exploring the challenge of punctuation among Arab students while other studies conducted on Arab learners concerned their use of relative clauses (Kharama, 1985; Tadors, 1979). Kharama (1985) attempted to explore Arab learners' inability to write relative clauses correctly when they write English essays.

In a similar study, Tadors (1979) examined Sudanese students' problems when using relative clauses and found three kinds of mistakes: using definite articles inappropriately, omitting the relative clause pronoun, and using an inappropriate pronoun with a relative clause. The study result showed that students committed errors due to interference with their first language, Arabic.

Interference between the first language and second language. Since Interference challenge has been studied by many researchers using different cases, so the researcher set a separate subheading for these differences of interference challenge.

Each person who writes a piece of paper usually thinks in his or her mother tongue regarding sentence structure. For ELLs, they have to pay attention to the interference of the mother tongue with the second one (target language) to detect the impact of two languages on each other. Hashim (1999) pointed out that the first language (L1) interference refers to the students' mother tongue negative influence on communication when attempting to use the target language during spoken or written interactions.

The effects of the first language interference on the second language writing skill have been found in many studies (Bhela, 1999; Phoocharoensil, 2013; Randall & Meara, 1988; Tadors, 1979). For example, Bhela (1999) investigated the interference between the first language and the second language among four students from different countries. By giving them

pictures to write stories about, Bhela demonstrated that the students wrote inefficient stories and inadequate structures due to the interference between the two languages.

Likewise, Phoocharoensil (2013) attempted to discern the influence of the first language (L1) on the target language (L2) and drew linguistic data from two groups of Thai English as a foreign language (EFL) students who had varied English language levels. The findings indicated that the first language has an important function in the participants' learning and that high proficiency learners depend on L1 in content knowledge comprehension.

In a study conducted by Salamah (1981) that was based on the differences between contrastive Arabic and English morphological features, the researcher explored the most difficult challenge Arab learners face when they write in English. The findings showed that the differences in Arabic and English morphology are a considerable challenge for Arab learners. Likewise, conducting his research on six Arab learners to explore the English writing difficulties, Swales and Mustafa (1984) concluded that Arab learners encounter challenges when writing in English because of the graphological differences between Arabic and English. In summary, research has shown that interference between the first language and second language affects all aspects of the writing process (Randall & Meara, 1988; Tadors, 1979).

Approaches used to investigate language interference. Alhaysony (2012) asserted that a variety of studies has been conducted to investigate second language acquisition (SLA). The Contrastive Analysis (CA) approach has been rooted in behaviorism and structuralism (Magnan, 1983). Contrastive Analysis is a kind of linguistic study that discusses a problem in SLA in regards to the interference of the first language (L1) on communication. The root of errors, according to CA perspective, is that learners have habits of language use that were formed through their L1 and interfere with exchanges in the second language.

AbiSamara (2003) pointed that Error Analysis (EA) is a style of analyzing learners' mistakes linguistically and takes a broader approach than CA. Error Analysis analyzes the learner's first language along with analyzing his or her mistakes committed in the second language and tries to understand the causes of those errors (Magnan, 1983). CA and EA differ in how they explain the causes of errors. While EA takes the features of the first language into consideration, the cause of errors is not due to those differences between L1 and L2. Rather, errors are more likely to have occurred due to the learner's misunderstandings and guesses about how the L2 works regarding grammar, word order, etc. (James, 2013).

Going through some studies used, the research using the EA approach demonstrates its importance for English language learners in general and Arab learners specifically as it explores what the common mistakes that Arab learners commit. For example, Kambal (1980) used the EA approach to conducting a study on Sudanese University students to investigate syntactic errors that would be made by Arab learners. He found that students made three types of errors regarding verb phrases. These errors are committed in subject-verb agreement, tenses, and verb formation. Another study by Zughul (1991) explored Arab learners' lexical choice errors. The study targeted 128 students studying at Yarmouk University in Jordan. Zughul (1991) concluded that many of the students' errors would be predicted when using the CA perspective and linguistic interference. In summary, the EA approach was found to be more accurate for detecting students' mistakes.

Arab Learners' Specific Challenges

Spelling challenges. Mahmoud (2013) stated that:

Spelling is a language skill whereby sounds (phonemes) are represented by letters (graphemes) which constitute the smallest building blocks of written language. The

structure and texture of written language begin with spelling. Most researchers, past and present, highlight the importance of spelling in writing. (p. 6)

A lot of studies that have been conducted to investigate the spelling errors that Arab students face (Al- Bakri, 1998; Al Jayousi, 1994; Al- Karaki, 2005; Bahloul, 2007; Ramadan, 1986).

Although each of these studies uses different methodologies or focuses on the various aspects of writing and spelling, they all agree that spelling remains a complex challenge for Arabic speakers. For example, Al-Karaki (2005) investigated spelling mistakes of 8th and 11th-grade students in Jordan. Her study focused on the reasons for the kinds of spelling errors being made. She found that these errors could be classified into six categories: (a) addition, which means that the students add a letter that does not exist in the original spelling of the word; (b) omission, which means that the students eliminate one letter or more of the word; (c) substitution, which means that the students substitute one letter, usually happening to vowels, with another within a word; (d) segmentation which, means to break apart a word into its individual spoken sounds, i.e., 'cat' segmented would be: c-a-t; (e) disordering which means to switch the original order of the letters within a word, and (f) miscellaneous errors that would not fit under any of the listed errors. The findings showed that, of these errors, addition, omission and substitution were the most common.

In a similar study by Al-Bakri (1998), the researcher investigated students of English department at Yarmouk University in Jordan. The findings are similar to what Al-karaki (2005) found regarding the common error that Arabic-speaking students make, specifically those regarding the addition, omission, and substitution. Al-Bakri (1998), however, added inversion (i.e., the reversal of two letters when spelling) in his list of common errors.

Likewise, Ramadhan (1986) conducted research to explore spelling challenges of 200 students in the 9th to 12th grade (high school), when writing compositions in English. The researcher classified the challenges into three broad groups: splits, intra-morphemic errors, and morphemic errors, then divided each group to more specific errors. For example, he divided morphemic errors into five subtypes; intra-morphemic was divided into four subtypes, and Splits was divided into two types. Interestingly, Ramadhan (1986) found that errors gradually faded as students moved to a higher level. Also, the results showed that most spelling mistakes occur in the middle of the words, and least at the beginning.

Article challenges. Articles are another common cause of errors for Arabic students learning English. The reason for these errors is partly because Arabic and English derive from different language origins. According to El-Sayed (1982), the English language came from Indo-European language while the Arabic language came from Semitic group of languages. Hence, there are many differences between Arabic and English grammar structures, including the use of articles.

The English language uses three kinds of articles: the zero article, the indefinite article ‘a’ or ‘an’ and the definite article ‘the’. ‘The’ is used for particular nouns in the singular and plural form while ‘a’ or ‘an’ are used with non-specific nouns in the singular form. The Zero article is for non-specific nouns in the form of plural, proper nouns, mass nouns, abstract nouns and uncountable nouns as in sugar and milk (Quirk et al., 1972).

However, the Arabic system of article use is entirely different from the English one. The Arabic language has two articles; one is the definite article ‘the’ which is in Arabic ‘al’ and the second article is the zero article—there is no indefinite article (‘a’ or ‘an’) in Arabic. The use of

the definite article in Arabic occurs far more frequently within texts and is the primary difference between Arabic and English article usage system.

A bulk of studies has been conducted to explore articles errors and writing difficulties of English as second language learners. These studies have found that article errors are frequently committed by English learners, Arabic, and non-Arabic speakers alike. (AbiSamra, 2003; Bukhari, Ahmad & Hussain, 2011; Smith, 2001; Snape, 2005). Although some studies focus on article errors, some others investigate writing errors in general. However, articles errors are raised as one of the most common errors committed. In his detailed article on Arabic speakers, Smith (2001) asserted that the omission or misuse of the indefinite article is the most common mistake. Arab speakers usually eliminate indefinite articles with plural and singular countable nouns.

To further examine the use of articles by Arabic speakers, AbiSamra (2003) conducted research on ten students in the 9th grade. The results were revealed among writing samples and categorized under five types of errors: (a) grammatical errors; (b) syntactic errors; (c) semantic errors; (d) substance errors; and (e) lexical errors. In detail, grammatical errors included prepositions, articles, etc. Syntactic errors have included word order, sentence structure, and coordination, etc. Semantic and substance errors have included errors such as spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Lastly, lexical errors have included word choice and discourse errors. AbiSamra (2003), in conclusion, suggested that students are better supported frequently use English at home and with friends to enhance their English proficiency and reduce the language challenge including article challenge by practice.

Preposition challenges. Another important type of error that has been identified by researchers is the use of prepositions. These errors are due to the differences and exchangeable

positions of prepositions in the Arabic language compared to English, in which preposition usage is comparatively restricted. For example, weekdays in the English language takes the 'on' preposition (on weekdays) while the noun takes the preposition 'in' in the Arabic language. Using 'in' and 'on' when one refers to the exact time is correct in Arabic grammar while in English one has to use 'on' restrictively in this case. Studies have shown that Arab learners commit mistakes regarding prepositions usage. However, these mistakes are not only in the writing process but extend to speech as well (El-Sayed, 1982; Scott & Tucker, 1974).

Scott and Tucker (1974) attempted to investigate errors Arabic-speaking students commit when they write or speak. They found fourteen types of mistakes including prepositions, verbs, articles, relative clauses, sentential complements, repetition of subject or object, nouns, pronouns, surrogate subjects, and word order. The reasons behind these errors are classified into three categories: performance mistakes, mother-tongue interference and false interlanguage analogy.

El-Sayed (1982) examined the frequency of syntactic errors by analyzing Saudi students' compositions. The results revealed that the use of prepositions is one of the most common errors that Arab students make. El-Sayed (1982) concluded that the main cause of these errors is a mother-tongue influence on the second language.

Grammar challenges. According to Rokni and Seifi (2013), it is very crucial for ELLs to realize how essential grammar rules are for writing meaningful texts. English language learners have to transfer ideas to coherent writing by using appropriate grammar rules. Freeman (2003) suggested that grammatical accuracy is one of the fundamental skills that ELLs should learn to avoid miscommunication and to guarantee to convey the targeted meaning of the writer.

Al-Khasawneh (2010) attempted to explore the academic writing problems of Arab college learners and to find solutions to such problems. He raised four questions regarding academic writing challenges. Al-Khasawneh (2010) interviewed graduate students to investigate the challenges they face when writing in English at a college stage. The findings showed that the students have had many challenges in term of vocabulary register, the organization of ideas, grammar, spelling, and referencing.

Strategies to Improve Writing Skills

The importance of adopting effective strategies. Students need to be taught according to the latest approaches applied to ESL learners. In every context and aspect of language, students have their unique needs. Hence, professors should be knowledgeable of such needs to teach students accordingly. Some of the teaching methods that are presented at the university level cause problems for students concerning their writing (Ivanic & Lea, 2006; Scott, 2006; Wingate, 2006). This is because such approaches are not appropriate for students since these methods do not meet students' needs in writing. Teachers should not teach students using inadequate or old approaches such as study skill model. Teaching using one strategy would not be helpful for all students since they come from different backgrounds and have varied academic needs and individual differences. Teachers have to present approaches that have determined strengths in teaching academic writing to students (Wingate, 2006).

English writing difficulties that English language learner face are due to many factors. One crucial factor that hinders ELLs from progressing in English writing is the type of the teaching strategies that they are exposed to. Many researchers have explored the effectiveness of a variety of strategies that could be used when teaching English writing (Al Alami, 2014; Hinkel, 2006; Luna & Ortiz, 2013; Reza, Ardeshir, & Zahed, 2013).

Hinkel (2006) stated that writing is the most difficult skill to master since a collection of thoughts and ideas have to be made and then transferred to the target language. Luna and Ortiz (2013) emphasized that academic writing is important, arguing “Most universities demand that their students take and pass international exams with a high score, and this includes the ability to write academically” (p. 132). Consequently, exploring the effectiveness of writing strategies is significant, because it can help students achieve writing proficiency, which is a critical skill.

Cooperative learning strategy. According to Slavin (1990), Cooperative Learning is an educational method which aims to organize class activities towards academic and social practice. Cooperative learning is described as structuring positive interdependence. Hence, students should work in groups to accomplish tasks collectively toward academic goals.

Research has suggested that presenting cooperative learning in teaching writing helps students to enhance their writing skill (Hervila, 2000; Luna & Ortiz, 2013; Storch 2005). Hervila (2000) suggested implementing group work rather than peer review which is commonly utilized in school settings. He stated that group work would enable students to share ideas and experience, and enlarge their information regarding shared topic while peer review would only help students in correcting each other (Hirvela, 2000). This view is confirmed by Luna and Ortiz’s (2013) research investigating the use of cooperative learning to enhance writing and project work among 18 English as foreign language learners. Their findings demonstrated that practicing writing process during cooperative project work helped students to promote their academic writing.

Storch (2005) explored the effectiveness of cooperative learning on English language learners’ writing. He gave 23 participants a chance to choose to work independently or in pairs. The researcher let some of the students work as a group, and some of them work individually to

evaluate the effect of the cooperative learning on the outcomes. The participants were given topics to write about. The results showed that the writing samples of each pairing group were shorter than students who work individually. However, they were better regarding the performance of the task and grammar accuracy.

Generating ideas and appropriate feedback have been described as an important part of the cooperative learning process (Storch, 2005). The research is investigating the perceptions of students towards learning revealed that most learners had a positive view of their experience, especially when compared with more traditional, teacher-focused approaches (Storch, 2005). These findings of cooperative learning encourage professors to include cooperative learning style when teaching English to enhance students' writing and other skills.

Reading strategies. A bulk of research has been conducted and proven that there is a correlation between comprehensive reading and some of the linguistic adeptness like boosted writing ability (Guo, 2012). According to Hsu and Lee (2007), reading has positive effects on the writing of the college students in Taiwan. However, Ito (2011) claimed that few investigations, in fact, have been undertaken regarding the relationship between reading and writing, although there is an evident relationship between these two crucial skills (Giuliano, 2001; McGann, 2001). As Ghorbani et al. (2013) have stated, "It is usually assumed that reading and writing are like two sides of the same coin and a good reader makes a good piece of writing" (p. 2). For example, Alkhwaldah (2001) investigated the improvement of writing skills among the Jordanian eighth-grade students by implementing extensive reading. The results showed an increase in the students' writing skills. Likewise, Hinkel (2006) suggested that teaching reading would enhance students' writing ability. He explained that certain reading materials can be introduced by teachers to the students to read and analyze. Students would learn the grammar structure in

addition to the contextualized vocabulary at the same time. He added that the influence of the first language would continue to be present among second language learners so instructor should clarify the differences between first and target language writing system so learners would avoid mistakes committed as a result of L1 influence.

The reciprocal teaching strategy. In a study conducted by Reza, Ardeshir and Zahed (2013), the researchers explored the effectiveness of the reciprocal teaching strategy, which means that a teacher makes a discussion and conversations with him and his/her students regarding the segments of a text. This debate or conversations should be instructed under four strategies: clarifying, question generating, predicting and summarizing. The findings showed that the writing ability of EFL students concentrating on reading comprehension is better than the students who did not. They added that good writing has two major features: cohesion and coherence. They defined cohesion as “surface level signals that reflect the discourse organization of the text and the intended purposes of the writer” while coherence was defined as “whatever links the meanings of utterances in discourse or of the sentences in a text” (Reza et al., 2013, p. 2).

Literature-based course. Literature-based course strategy uses novels, poems, plays, and other works of literature to promote writing skills, the idea being that good works of literature provide a model for the students to follow. Examining college students’ writing ability in EFL context in the United Arab of Emirates, Al Alami (2014) justified using a literature-based course claiming that literature has a role to improve students writing skill. He adopted an experimental design and divided the sample of his study into two groups: experimental and control. The experimental group is taking the literature-based course while the control group is taking a general course in English. A pre-test has been administered to analyze the effectiveness

of the presented treatment to the two groups. The post-test showed that experimental group performance was better in term of writing ability and critical thinking than the control group due to the implementation of literature-based course.

Text-based approach. This approach implies that writing skills are learned through reading texts. For example, a learner would acquire writing styles and their typical language environment through reading some texts. Thornbury (2005) claims that “language always happens as text and not as isolated words and sentences” (p. 8). This approach considers the writing as an artifact of structure and focuses on the text’s features and checks the accuracy of the outcomes (Candlin and Hyland, 1999). The standpoint of this approach is to test the concrete parts such as lexicon and grammar of the text or the discourse forms (Hyland, 2009, p. 5). A study conducted by Qian (2011) comparing between the text-based approach and the dictionary-based approach of vocabulary learning in a Chinese university. Learners were divided into two groups, A and B. Ten words with their explanations within a text had been handed to group A while group B had the same words with their examples and meanings without a context. Ten minutes later, all of the two groups were received the same test. After two weeks, the two groups took the same test again. The results demonstrated that text-based approach is more effective than dictionary-based approach for learners to memorize and master new vocabulary.

Methodology

This mixed method study investigated the perceptions of professors and students toward English writing difficulties in the English Department at Qassim University. Mixed method research applies qualitative and quantitative research methods to the same study. The research used a mixed method since it presents more accurate results for the study. The researcher used semi-structured questions to investigate the professors' perceptions toward English writing challenges. To explore the students' perceptions, the researcher used a 5-point Likert scale survey, since it is appropriate for research tied to social and human issues (Croasmun & Ostrom, 2011). The researcher distributed a quantitative survey to the students and obtained qualitative interview data from three professors at the same English department at QU. The aim of this study was to explore professors' and students' beliefs toward English writing difficulties in order to determine if their beliefs matched one other, or if they have different perceptions, which could affect students' writing acquisition. Awareness of these potentially different perceptions can guide professors to pay attention to their students' needs to help them overcome their difficulties in writing. The adapted survey was distributed to undergraduate students in Qassim University to ask them about the difficulties that they face when writing in English (Appendix A). The participants were 83 male students majoring in the English language and three professors. The students' ages range from 18 to 22 years old, which is the average age of the college students in Saudi Arabia. The professors' ages range from 25 to 55 years old.

Setting

The setting of this study was Qassim University in Saudi Arabia. It is a public university in the Qassim region of Saudi Arabia. It was established in 2004 by merging two universities, Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University and King Saud University. Qassim University

was featured in the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World Ranking for the first time in 2011. According to the QS report, Qassim University has shown excellent potential for strengthening its reputation by harnessing its core strengths in teaching and research. The total number of male and female students enrolled at the university during the 2010-2011 academic year was approximately 50,000 students, while the total number of faculty members and staff reached more than 4,000 members. The academic calendar in Qassim University is organized by semesters. The main campus is located in the center of the Qassim region in Buraydah, a city covering 7.8 square kilometers (See Figure 1). Twenty-eight colleges all over the Qassim region are administered by Qassim University. This study was conducted in the College of Arabic and Social Studies in Buraydah, specifically in the English Department. Fifty-six professors from different regions and countries are teaching in the English department. A student enrolled in the English department has to take an average of eight semesters of coursework. There are three kinds of requirements a student must fulfill to graduate; the university requirements such as Islamic Culture and Arabic Language Skills; the college requirements such as Thinking Skills and Computer Usage Skills; and the department requirements such as French Language, Introduction to Linguistic, and International Tests. For example, in the first semester, a student may take the courses shown in Table 1:

Table 1

Sample of First Semester Student Schedule

Courses	Credits
Thinking Skills and Learning Styles	2
Arabic Language Skills	2
Skills for Using the Computer	2
English Grammar and Rules to Write a sentence	2
Listening and Dialogues	2
Reading and Building Vocabulary	3
Teaching Pronunciation	3
Islamic Culture	2
	18 Credits

*Figure 1.* The Map of Qassim University.**Participants**

This research study consisted of two parts. For the first part, 86 students enrolled in the English Department of Qassim University in Saudi Arabia were surveyed. These 86 students constitute the entire population of the English majors at QU. The second part interviewed 3 professors teaching in the same Department of the English language. All of the students and professors taking part in this study were male, since there are no co-educational universities in

Saudi Arabia. The students' ages ranged from 18 to 22 years old. All of the student participants were Saudis coming from different areas in the Qassim region, while the professors were from various countries, Egypt, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. The professors' ages range from 25 to 50 years old.

The researcher chose the students studying in the Department of English because this group of students is expected to be able to express their ideas well when writing in the English language. Most instruction, however, takes place in Arabic, which might affect the development of English writing skills. Therefore, this group of participants was expected to provide an interesting amount of data towards answering the research questions of this study.

Select a topic and research questions. Through the researcher's personal experience, he became interested in this topic as an international student at an American university studying how to teach the English language for ELLs. In the college stage as a learner, I was expected to write at a high academic level and experienced some difficulties regarding my ability to write accurately and to express clear ideas. Hence, the researcher became interested in exploring the reasons why students from Saudi Arabia make the errors in composition and what techniques and strategies are used by professors to address the students' needs.

This research employed a mixed method (qualitative and quantitative) research design to investigate the following research questions:

1. What challenges do Arab college students face when writing in the English language?
2. What difficulties do teachers believe Arab college students encounter when writing in the English language?
3. What strategies do teachers use to help students cope with their writing difficulties?

Design quantitative survey. An adapted survey was distributed to the students of the English department at Qassim University. The researcher administered the survey to the students by himself, and it took about ten minutes for each student to answer all the survey questions. The researcher distributed the survey at Qassim University in the English Department during final exams week. This survey has two sections; the first dealt with students' writing difficulties regarding formats and skills, while the second related to the students' difficulties in grammar and mechanics. The students' answers were analyzed for comparison with professors' answers. This survey was adapted based on the information found in a literature review investigating the English writing difficulties that the students encountered. The statements are written in a simple and understandable way, so the participants would not be confused. The survey design was a 5-point Likert scale (see Appendix A). The 5-point Likert scale was used since it is useful for measuring perceptions and attitudes related to social studies (Croasmun & Ostrom, 2011). Each item consisted of five options to measure to what extent a participant agrees or disagrees with each statement. These options are: *strongly agree*, *agree*, *neutral*, *disagree*, and *strongly disagree*. The first section of the survey contains ten statements about writing skills and format. This section investigated the difficulty level that a student faces when writing.

The other section is about grammar and mechanics challenges regarding English writing. Ten items were introduced to explore the difficulties students face when writing in English. These questions concern the difficulty of using appropriate vocabulary, spelling challenges, using punctuation, etc.

These questions aimed to discover the students' perceptions of English writing difficulties faced when writing in English in the English Department at Qassim University. The specific items were adapted from Al-Khairy's (2013) research into the writing difficulties at the

university-level in Saudi Arabia. Al-Khairy's survey was found to be a valid instrument for surveying students' perceptions of English writing difficulties (Al-Khairy, 2013). Also, Lee and Tajino's (2008) survey that covered English writing difficulties was adapted and combined with elements of Al-Khairy's (2013) survey along with four items adapted from Deng, Lee, Varaprasad, and Leng's (2010) research into academic writing for EFL/ESL students.

Table 2, below, shows the survey items adapted from Lee and Tajino's (2008) investigation into students' perception regarding their writing problems.

Table 2

Items adapted from Lee and Tajino (2008)

Section	Item	Prompt
A	1	Writing the Introduction
A	2	Writing the Conclusion
A	3	Following the Steps of the Writing Process (e.g., planning, writing, revision)
A	4	Gathering Information Relevant to the Topic
A	5	Expressing Ideas Clearly and Logically
A	8	Synthesizing Ideas
B	17	Use of Linking Words

Table 3, below, shows the survey items adapted from Al-Khairy's (2013) study into Saudi Arabian students' writing difficulties.

Table 3

Items adapted from Al-Khairy (2013)

Section	Item	Prompt
A	6	Writing Coherent Paragraphs
A	7	Summarizing Information
A	9	Using Appropriate Academic Styles
A	10	Using Various Patterns of Organization (e.g. process, comparison, cause, effect)
B	11	Use of Academic Vocabulary
B	12	Spelling
B	13	Use of Punctuation
B	18	Use of Prepositions
B	19	Use of Articles

Table 4, below, shows the survey items adapted from Deng, Lee, Varaprasad, and Leng's (2010) research into academic writing for EFL/ESL students.

Table 4

Items adapted from Deng et al. (2010)

Section	Item	Prompt
B	14	Use of Capitalization
B	15	Sentence Structures
B	16	Subject-Verb Agreement
B	20	Influence of the First Language

Design qualitative interview. The other instrument was an interview of three professors teaching in the same English Department regarding their perceptions of the English writing difficulties students usually face. The interview was a semi-structured qualitative interview based on eight questions adapted from Fageeh (2003) (See Appendix B) and supported by the information gained in the literature review. The researcher administered the interview face to face and each professor took ten minutes to answer all the survey questions. The interviews were conducted at Qassim University in the English Department. The interview process was conducted by handing the survey to each professor asking him about his educational background, teaching experience, his perceptions of English writing difficulties, and the aspects of writing difficulties students usually face. More questions were directed toward recognizing the reasons for the existence of such difficulties in order to determine which strategies would be used to help students overcome the difficulties that a professor had identified in his answers. The perceptions of the teacher towards the connection between the students' L1 and language errors were also discussed in the interview, in accordance with the literature review (See Table 5, below).

Table 5

*Research support for qualitative interview items**

Question Numbers	Issue	Research support
3 and 4	Identifying Difficulties	(Al-Khairy, 2013; Chokwe, 2011; Fageeh, 2003; Liton, 2013)
5	Reasons for Difficulties	(Al-Khairy, 2013; Fageeh, 2003)
6	Strategies Used	(Al-Khairy, 2013; Chokwe, 2011; Fageeh, 2003)
7 and 8	Perceptions of L1 Interference	(Fageeh, 2003)

*Questions 1 and 2 explore demographic factors and are not included here.

Table 6, below, shows the relationship between the issues identified above with the specific interview items.

Table 6

*Interview Questions/Framework**

Number	Interview Question	Research Issue
1	Could you please tell me about your educational background?	Background / demographics
2	Would you please tell me about your teaching experience?	Background / demographics
3	What are the difficulties you believe your students encounter when writing in English?	Identifying difficulties
4	What aspects of English do students encounter the most when they write?	Identifying difficulties
5	What do you think are the reasons behind your students writing difficulties?	Reasons for difficulties
6	What strategies would you use to help students cope with their writing difficulties in the English department at QU?	Strategies used
7	Does proficiency in the first language entail proficiency in the second one?	Perceptions of L1 interference
8	Do you think Arab students encounter difficulties different than those faced by other second language learners? Why?	Perceptions of L1 interference

*See Table 4 for research support of issues

Data Analysis

Since this research applied two methods, qualitative and quantitative, each method has a unique data analysis. For the students' survey, which represented the quantitative method, the researchers used Excel Software, figures, and charts to analyze the revealed data. On the other

hand, professors' responses have been incorporated in the text as direct quotes and then compared with students' responses.

Reliability and Validity

Since this study and others should follow research guidelines conducted by figures in the pursued field, reliability and validity are significant in this matter (Chokwe, 2011). Reliability shows to what extent the research consistency and accuracy are taken into consideration when collecting data (Bell 2005:117; McDonough and McDonough 1997:63; Best and Kahn 1993:208; Seliger and Shohamy 1989:185). Upon following the reliability and validity guidelines, the researcher adapted the two surveys from various studies (Al-Khairi, 2013; Chokwe, 2011; Fageeh, 2003; Liton, 2013).

Results

This study attempted to explore the English writing difficulties Arab English learners face. In this study, a mixed method design was used. Eight questions were given to three professors, and a survey of twenty questions was delivered to 86 students. The study raised three questions; (1) What challenges do Arab college students face when writing in the English language? (2) What difficulties do teachers believe that Arab college students encounter when writing in the English language? (3) What strategies do teachers use to enhance students' writing?

Quantitative Survey Results

Students were asked to rate their response to twenty aspects of English writing difficulties. These twenty aspects were divided into major sections; ten aspects related to the difficulties of English language writing skills, and the other ten aspects were related to difficulties of grammar and mechanics. Five options were available for students to choose which degree a certain difficulty would fit. For example, when a student checks a box of *strongly agree* for 'writing the introduction,' he strongly agrees that he faces difficulties when he writes an introduction.

In order to investigate the research question, "What challenges do Arab college students face when writing in the English language?" the researcher created a survey which consisted of 20 items divided by two general groups; each group consisted of 10 items. The first group was coded "Group A" focused on difficulties related to English language writing for academic purposes, and consisted of 3 themes: Composition and Paragraph Structure, Academic Writing Process, and Expression in Academic Writing (see Table 7, below).

Table 7

Group A: Difficulties Related to English Language Writing Skills-Summary Themes and Prompts

Theme	Item #	Prompt Statement
<u>Composition and Paragraph Structure</u>	A1	Writing the Introduction
	A2	Writing the Conclusion
	A6	Writing Coherent Paragraphs
<u>Writing Process</u>	A3	Following steps in the Writing Process (e.g., planning, writing, revision)
	A4	Gathering Information Relevant to the Topic
	A10	Using various patterns of organization (e.g. process, comparison, cause, effect).
<u>Expression in Writing</u>	A5	Expressing Ideas Clearly and Logically
	A7	Summarizing Information
	A8	Synthesizing Ideas
	A9	Using Appropriate Academic Styles

The second group, “Group B”, was designed to gauge the perceptions of students regarding English grammar and mechanics. Group B consisted of three themes: Grammar, Mechanics, and Transfer Errors (see Table 8 for the summary of themes and prompts).

Table 8

Group B: Difficulties Related to Grammar and Mechanics-Summary of Themes and Prompts

Theme	Item #	Prompt Statement
<u>Transfer Errors</u>	B11	Use of Appropriate Vocabulary
	B15	Sentence Structures
	B20	Influence of the First Language
<u>Writing Mechanics</u>	B12	Spellings
	B13	Use of Punctuation
	B14	Use of Capitalization
<u>Grammar</u>	B16	Subject-Verb Agreement
	B17	Use of Linking Words
	B18	Use of Prepositions
	B19	Use of Articles

Difficulties Related to English Language Writing Skills

Composition and paragraph structure. In term of ‘writing the introduction’ (A1), more than half of the students (52.32%) agreed that they encountered difficulties when writing the introduction, while 27.91% disagreed, and 19.77% of the students were neutral. Students were asked to report on ‘writing the conclusion’ (A2). As shown in Table 9, 41.87% of the students agreed that ‘writing conclusion’ is one of the difficulties they faced when writing in English, while 32.56% disagreed with this statement. However, one-fourth (25.58) of the students checked the neutral box. The last aspect of this theme students were asked about was the difficulty of “writing coherent paragraphs.” The majority of the participants (65.11%) affirmed that they found this aspect difficult when writing, 19.77% of the students were neutral, and 15.125% disagreed with the statement (see Table 9).

Writing process. Another aspect of English writing skill difficulties more than half of the students (56.97%) stated as a difficulty when they write academically was “following steps in the writing process,” however, 18.61% disagreed with this statement and 24.42% of the students were neutral in their response (see Table 9). The next statement classified under the writing process was (A4), the difficulty of ‘gathering information relevant to the topic’. The majority of the participants (56.97%) found this skill challenging. However, 29.07% of the students chose the neutral response, and 13.95% of the participants did not believe that this aspect held any difficulty. Nearly two-thirds of the students (65.12) believed that ‘using various patterns of organization (e.g. process, comparison, cause, effect) was one of the English writing difficulties, 15.11% disagreed with this statement, and 19.77% of the participants chose the neutral response (see Table 9).

Expression in writing. Four items were categorized under this theme; expressing ideas clearly and logically, summarizing information, synthesizing ideas, and using appropriate academic styles. More than half of the participants (62.79%) agreed that ‘expressing ideas clearly and logically’ was one of the difficulties they faced when writing, while almost one-tenth (11.63%) did not view this as a difficult skill. However, one-fourth (25.58%) of the students were neutral. In response to ‘summarizing information’, the majority of students (58.14) agreed that this skill was difficult for them, while one-fifth of the students disagreed or were neutral, (20.93%) exactly for each. Most of the students (59.3%) believed that ‘synthesizing ideas’ was a difficult skill when writing in English, 13.96% disagreed with this as a difficult skill, and about one-fourth (26.74%) were neutral. More than two-thirds of the participants (68.6%) agreed that ‘using appropriate academic styles’ was a challenge for them, 5.81% disagreed, and approximately one-fourth (25.58) chose the neutral response (see Table 9).

Table 9

Student Perception of Difficulties Related to English Language Writing Skills

Statement Code	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A1	12.79%	39.53%	19.77%	24.42%	3.49%
A2	10.47%	31.40%	25.58%	30.23%	2.33%
A3	17.44%	39.53%	24.42%	15.12%	3.49%
A4	22.09%	34.88%	29.07%	12.79%	1.16%
A5	22.09%	40.70%	25.58%	9.30%	2.33%
A6	22.09%	43.02%	19.77%	12.79%	2.33%
A7	13.95%	44.19%	20.93%	16.28%	4.65%
A8	13.95%	45.35%	26.74%	10.47%	3.49%
A9	30.23%	38.37%	25.58%	4.65%	1.16%
A10	29.07%	36.05%	19.77%	9.30%	5.81%

Note. N=86. Score data are from a Likert-scale of 1 to 5, where 5 is strongly agree and 1 is strongly disagree; the higher the number, the higher degree of agreement.

Difficulties Related to Grammar and Mechanics

Transfer errors. In term of ‘use of appropriate vocabulary’ (B11), more than half of the students (59.31%) agreed that they encountered difficulties when they tried to find the appropriate vocabulary for a certain context, while 16.28% disagreed, and about one-fourth (24.42%) of the students were neutral. Students were also asked to report on ‘sentence structures’ difficulty degree (B12). As shown in Table 10, 46.52% of the students agreed that ‘sentence structure’ is one of the difficulties they faced when writing in English, while more than one-fourth 27.91% disagreed with this statement. However, more than one-fourth (25.58%) of the students checked the neutral box. Regarding the last aspect of this theme, students were asked about the ‘influence of the first language. The majority of the participants (53.49%) affirmed that they found this aspect difficult when writing, 27.91% of the students were neutral, and about 18.60% disagreed with the statement (see Table 10).

Writing mechanics. Three statements were categorized under this theme; spelling, use of punctuation, and use of capitalization. More than half of the participants (59.3%) agreed that ‘spelling’ was one of the difficulties they faced when writing, while (18.6%) did not perceive this skill difficulty. However, more than one-fifth (22.09%) of the students were neutral. In response to ‘use of punctuation’, 46.51% of the participants agreed that this skill was difficult for them, while 30.24% of the students disagreed, and 23.26% were neutral. Just around one-fourth (25.58) of the students believed that ‘use of capitalization’ was a difficult skill when writing in English while the majority (58.14%) disagreed with this skill difficulty, and 16.28% kept neutral.

Grammar. In terms of another aspect of English writing skill difficulty, about two-fifth of the students (40.7%) stated a difficulty when they write academically was ‘subject-verb agreement,’ while 36.05% disagreed with this statement, and 23.26% of the students remained

neutral (see Table 10). The next statement classified under the grammar theme was (B17), the difficulty of ‘use of linking words’. More than one-third of the participants (34.89%) reported that this skill presented difficulties for them. However, more than two-fifths (40.70%) of the students chose the neutral response, and about one-fourth (24.42%) of the participants did not believe that this aspect of the grammar presented any difficulty for them. Exactly half of the students (50.00%) believed that ‘use of prepositions’ was one of their English writing difficulties, 23.25% disagreed with this statement, and more than one-fourth (26.74%) of the participants chose the neutral response. In response to ‘use of articles’, more than one-third of students (36.05) agreed that this skill was difficult for them, while more than two-fifths of the students (40.86) disagreed and more than one-fifth were neutral (22.09%), (see Table 10).

Table 10

Difficulties Related to Grammar and Mechanics

Statement Code	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
B11	10.47%	48.84%	24.42%	13.95%	2.33%
B12	34.88%	24.42%	22.09%	12.79%	5.81%
B13	20.93%	25.58%	23.26%	23.26%	6.98%
B14	11.63%	13.95%	16.28%	30.23%	27.91%
B15	10.47%	36.05%	25.58%	17.44%	10.47%
B16	17.44%	23.26%	23.26%	19.77%	16.28%
B17	10.47%	24.42%	40.70%	15.12%	9.30%
B18	11.63%	38.37%	26.74%	18.60%	4.65%
B19	15.12%	20.93%	22.09%	24.42%	17.44%
B20	30.23%	23.26%	27.91%	9.30%	9.30%

Note. N=86. Score data are from a Likert-scale of 1 to 5, where 5 is strongly agree and 1 is strongly disagree; the higher the number, the higher degree of agreement.

The study results also show that the students found ‘using appropriate academic styles’ the most difficult skill to be mastered, scoring 3.92 out of 5.00 (See Tables 11 & 12). The second most difficult writing skill was ‘using various patterns of organization (e.g. process, comparison,

cause and effect’) scoring 3.73 out of 5. These results could be expected, since using academic styles and using various patterns of organization demand high a proficiency of language and writing skills.

“Using of capitalization” was the least difficult skill that students perceived, scoring 2.51 out of 5.00; “using of articles” came in second place for the least difficult writing skills, scoring 2.92 out of 5.00. Although the Arabic writing system does not have capitalization, students did not find it difficult to understand the English capitalization system. For using articles, the Arabic writing system has two kinds of articles, while the English language has three kinds of articles: the zero article, the indefinite article ‘a’ or ‘an’, and the definite article ‘the’ (Quirk et al., 1972). Despite these differences, students believed that using articles is not a big issue when writing in English (See Table 11).

Table 11

Student Perception of Difficulties Related to English Language Writing Skills

Item Code	Survey Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
A1	Writing the Introduction	3.34	1.09
A2	Writing the Conclusion	3.70	1.03
A3	Following Steps in the Writing Process (e.g. planning, writing, revision)	3.52	1.06
A4	Gathering Information Relevant to the Topic	3.64	1.00
A5	Expressing Ideas Clearly and Logically	3.71	0.99
A6	Writing Coherent Paragraphs	3.70	1.03
A7	Summarizing Information	3.47	1.07
A8	Synthesizing Ideas	3.56	0.98
A9	Using Appropriate Academic Styles	3.92	0.92
A10	Using Various Patterns of Organization (e.g. process, comparison, cause, effect).	3.73	1.15

Note. N=86. Score data are from a Likert-scale of 1 to 5, where 5 is “strongly agree” and 1 is “strongly disagree”; the higher number means the greater degree of agreement. *M* = Mean. *SD* = Standard Deviation.

Table 12

Difficulties Related to Grammar and Mechanics

Item Code	Survey Item Prompt	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
B11	Use of Appropriate Vocabulary	3.5	1.09
B12	Spelling	3.70	1.05
B13	Use of Punctuation	3.30	1.06
B14	Use of Capitalization	2.51	1.00
B15	Sentence Structures	3.19	0.99
B16	Subject-Verb Agreement	3.06	1.03
B17	Use of Linking Words	3.12	1.07
B18	Use of Prepositions	3.34	0.98
B19	Use of Articles	2.92	0.92
B20	Influence of the First Language	3.56	1.15

Note. N=86. Score data are from a Likert-scale of 1 to 5, where 5 is “strongly agree” and 1 is “strongly disagree;” the higher number means the higher degree of agreement. *M* = Mean. *SD* = Standard Deviation.

Since the survey explored two different parts of English writing difficulties, comparing these two difficulties would be interesting. These two parts are the difficulties related to format and skills and the difficulties that related to grammar and mechanics. By looking to Figure 1, it is clear that students think skills and format difficulties are harder than grammar and mechanic difficulties. Regarding formatting and skills writing difficulties, students scored 3.57, while 3.22 was the score of grammar and mechanics difficulties (See figure 1).

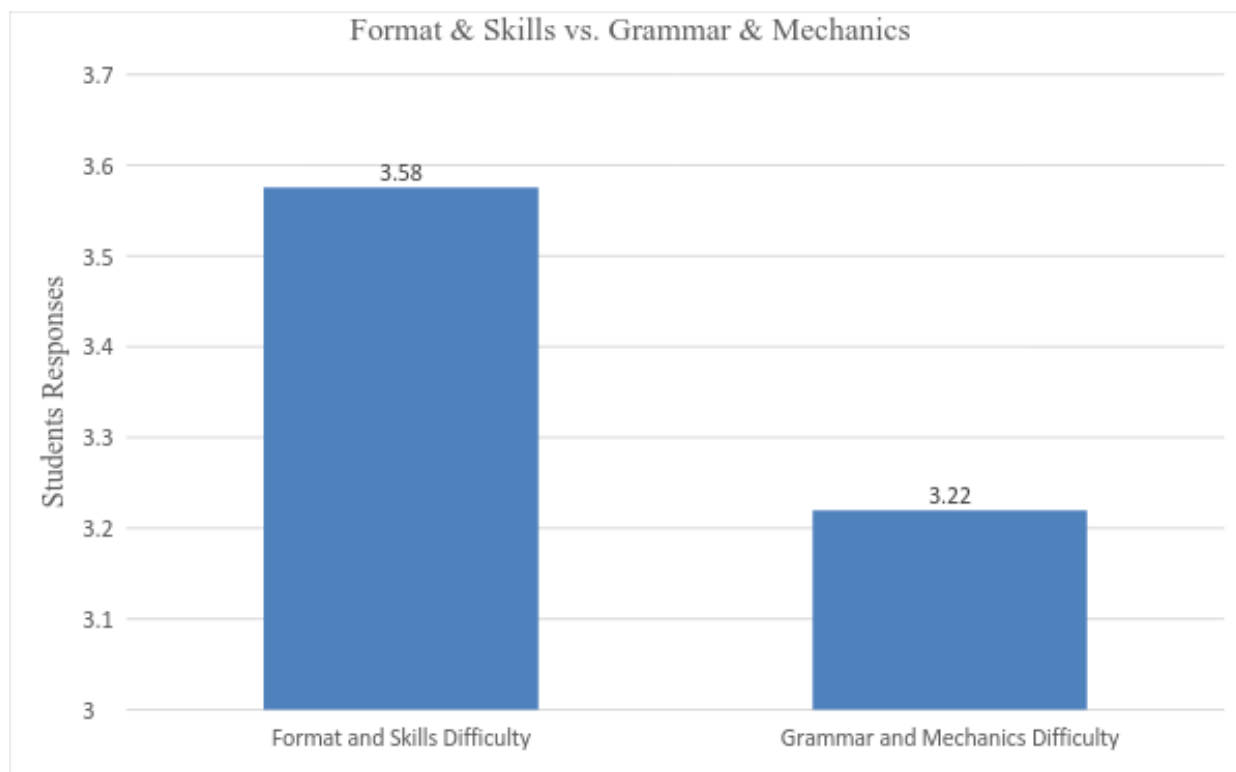


Figure 2. Comparison between Format & Skills vs. Grammar & Mechanics

When looking at students' responses to each statement, A4 and A9 have just one response for each. This indicates that students face difficulties when they try to gather information for a topic and/or to write in appropriate academic styles, scoring 1.16%. On the other hand, 51 students identified that A9 and A10 were skills encountered most in writing, forming 59.30% out of the whole population (n=86).

Qualitative Survey Results

This section would answer the second and third research questions; what difficulties do teachers believe that Arab college students encounter when writing in the English language? And what strategies do teachers use to enhance students' writing? Three professors were given eight questions regarding English writing difficulties that students face in the English Department. The three professors were from different countries and hold different levels of experience and

education (See Table 13). The professors' responses were divided into three themes: English writing difficulties, reasons behind English writing difficulties, and the strategies a professor uses to help students.

Table 13

Professors' Demographic Information

Code	Nationality	Age	Experience	Specialty	Education	1 st Language
A	Egyptian	52	20	TESOL	Ph.D.	Arabic
B	Pakistani	46	16	English Education	Ph.D.	Urdu
C	Saudi	25	>1 year	English Language Translation	B.A.	Arabic

English writing difficulties. In this theme, professors were asked two questions; what are the difficulties that you believe that your students encounter when writing in English? And what difficult aspects of English do students encounter the most when they write? All of the professors agree that sentence structure is one of the difficulties students face when writing in the English language. Professors' responses showed that the vocabulary inventory and lexical system make writing in English a challenge for Arab English learners. However, two of the three professors stated that spelling is one of the major problems for students in the English Department. Professor A pointed out that "punctuation, capitalization, grammar, and a lack of creativity are the most challenging skills to be mastered by students when writing in English". Professor B added that "Students faced difficulty with morphological structure, syntax, and writing styles". Professor C has not obtained his PhD yet, and he is twenty-five years old. He informed me that "Writing connected sentences and writing coherent paragraphs are the major challenge students encounter in English writing.

Reasons behind English writing difficulties. The results showed that all the professors agree that ‘lack of practice’ is the major reason for the English writing difficulties these students face. Another reason that one professor, whose native language is not Arabic, believes in is ‘the influence of mother tongue.’ Professor A asserted that “Lack of brainstorming is one of the reasons that make writing challenge for students”.

Used strategies to help students. Exposing students to more Arabic and English writing courses and presenting different practices are strategies that all the three professors identify as helping students when writing in English. Professor A uses different techniques of correction, such as a feedback strategy, in order to help students overcome their English writing difficulties. He added that “Teaching writing skills and giving students interesting topics to write about” are important strategies he uses to help students in writing. “Adding different exercises such as summarizing a book and/or long essays/articles would be helpful when teaching students to achieve success in English writing” said Professor B. Professor C stated that “Brainstorming strategy and presenting controlled writing techniques” are the most common strategies he uses to ease English writing tasks for students.

Arab students’ specific difficulties. Professor A said that “Using only Arabic language in students’ daily life is one of the Arab students’ challenges, since Arab countries are usually mon-language societies”. Professor B, who is again not a native Arabic speaker, thought that “Differences of morphological structure between Arabic and English and differences of lexical system between Arabic and English are the main two reasons of English writing challenges for Arab students. “Arab students face the same difficulties any English learner may face, and even if there are particular challenges Arab students encounter, they would be little problems such as phonemes difficulties”.

Discussion

This study attempted to explore professors' and students' perceptions towards English writing difficulties. Three questions have been raised; what challenges do Arab college students in Saudi Arabia face when writing in the English language? What difficulties do teachers believe that Arab college students encounter when writing in the English language? And what strategies do teachers use to enhance students' writing? The purpose of this mixed methods study is to make professors aware of their students' challenges with English writing.

Students' Perceptions

The results showed that students encounter many difficulties when writing in English. Although difficulties related to writing skills scored 71.6%, difficulties related to grammar and mechanics still represent challenges for students, scoring 25.4%. This could be related to the nature of teaching English in Saudi Arabia, which focuses on grammar and mechanics more than on writing skills and process (Fageeh, 2003).

One of the interesting results was that more than two-fifths (41.86%) did not perceive 'Use of Articles' as difficult, although "Use of Articles" had been found repeatedly to be a difficulty for Arab students in the research (AbiSamra, 2003; Bukhari, Ahmad & Hussain, 2011; Smith, 2001; Snape, 2005). One explanation of this is that students might think that "Using Articles" is just about choosing an/a for singular nouns and/or 'the' for previously mentioned plural and/or singular nouns, while using the appropriate article needs more attention and understanding of the context and the word altogether.

"Use of appropriate vocabulary" was one of the highest mean scores by students (3.5), which means that students clearly found this writing skill challenging. This is similar to Al-Khairy's (2013) findings where students scored 3.8 regarding the appropriate vocabulary item.

Al-Khairy's study explores 75 students' perceptions toward English writing difficulty in Taif University. Also, this result is in line with Al-Khasawneh's (2010) and Rababa'h's (2003) results. Al-Khasawneh (2010) stated that students studying in Business College at the University of Utara Malaysia in the program lacked an adequate English vocabulary to write effectively. Rababa'h (2003) pointed out that students could not express themselves clearly due to their limited English vocabulary.

In response to the "Subject-verb Agreement" item, more than two-thirds of the students agreed that it presents a challenge. This is similar to Al-Badawi's (2012) results where 42.5% of the participants made mistakes related to subject-verb agreement. Al-Badawi believed that a lack of knowledge of the plural rules in the English language was the reason behind that. Al-Badawi's research used the qualitative method to analyze phonetic, morphological, and syntactic errors in English at King Khalid University in Saudi Arabia.

Items related to grammar, such as "Spelling", "Influence of the First Language", "Use of Appropriate Vocabulary", "Use of Prepositions" and "Use of Punctuation", scored high in the mean respectively: (3.7, 3.56, 3.5, 3.34, 3.3). This coincides with results found by Hutchinson & Waters (1987), Al-Khairy, (2013), and Al-Khasawneh (2010). Hutchinson & Waters (1987) advocated designing materials based on grammatical forms in order to use them as guidelines in teaching.

Since results showed that most of the students encountered challenges with most of the items and statements that were surveyed, it is important to compare students' perceptions of difficulties and challenges they faced when writing in English with professors' perceptions in order to answer the main question of the research.

The Gap between Professors' and Students' Perceptions

This research was conducted to investigate professors' and students' perceptions toward English writing challenges to help close the existing gap between their perceptions. The researcher chose six items to discuss, since the gap clearly exists between professors and students' perceptions. Four items were from the *Language Writing Skills* section and two items were from the *Grammar and Mechanics* section.

Language writing skills. The researcher investigated ten items related to *Language Writing Skills*.

The findings showed that one two-third of the students perceived the "Using appropriate academic styles" as a challenge. On the other hand, just one professor out of three perceived this skill as a challenge for his students. In answering the question of writing difficulties a professor believed that his students may encounter when writing in English, he said "Morphological, structure, syntactic, and writing styles are the most challenging skills students face when writing." Surprisingly, the other two professors' answers focused mostly on mechanical issues such as spelling, grammar, and sentence construction. These results clearly revealed how professors' perceptions did not match students' perceptions. By not fully understanding students' perceptions, professors would misunderstand students' needs and construct the curriculum in a way that may not adequately address students' challenges.

Limitations

- This study was applied on male students at Qassim University. The study did not consider female students and they may have different perceptions of English writing difficulties.

- This study has been conducted at one university out of more than 50 universities in Saudi Arabia, so these results may not represent all Saudi students' in higher education.
- This study used two different instruments (mixed methods) to explore English writing difficulties from the professors' and students' perceptions. Although these two different instruments gave reliability to the research, they may confuse professors, particularly by asking them to answer semi-open ended questions instead of giving them the same questions that were given to the students.

Implications and Recommendation Future Research

This study could be applied for teaching English in higher education settings and in institutes. Professors could understand students' difficulties and build the curriculum accordingly. Also, this research would be helpful for ESL teachers who teach in the Arab world, since this study was conducted on native Arabic learners.

In this study, the researcher obtained two different data sources from professors and students, trying to give professors more opportunity to talk about students' challenges, since they would have more experience. For future studies, a researcher may choose to apply one survey for both professors and students instead of using two different measurements as in this study in order to obtain different results about English writing difficulties. Moreover, a future researcher may apply this study to the beginner level as well as the advanced level to determine if students' and instructors' perceptions would change towards English language difficulties.

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*Appendix A***Students Survey**

No.	A. Difficulties related to format and skills	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	Writing the introduction					
2	Writing the conclusion					
3	Following steps in the writing process (e.g., planning, writing, revision)					
4	Gathering information relevant to the topic					
5	Expressing ideas clearly and logically					
6	Writing coherent paragraphs					
7	Summarizing information					
8	Synthesizing ideas					
9	Using appropriate academic styles					
10	Using various patterns of organization (e.g. process, comparison, cause, effect).					

No.	B. Difficulties related to grammar and mechanics	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
11	Use of appropriate vocabulary					
12	Spellings					
13	Use of punctuation					
14	Use of capitalization					
15	Sentence structures					
16	Subject-verb agreements					
17	Use of linking words					
18	Use of prepositions					
19	Use of articles					
20	Influence of the first language					

*Appendix B***Professors' Interview Questions**

Professor's major: _____ Years of experience _____

Hello, I am Badar Almuhaileb a master candidate in TESOL program in USA. I appreciate your time and volunteering in this study.

Firstly, would you mind if I record this interview?

1. Could you please tell me about your education background?
2. Would you please tell me about your teaching experience?
3. What are the difficulties you believe your students encounter when writing in English?

Specifically, in the English department at Qassim University?

4. What aspects of English do students encounter the most when they write?
5. What do you think are the reasons behind your students writing difficulties?
6. What strategies would you use to help students cope with their writing difficulties in the English department at QU?
7. Does proficiency in the first language entail proficiency in the second one?
8. Do you think Arab students encounter difficulties different than those faced by other second language learners? Why?

Appendix C

Qassim University's Permission to Conduct the Study

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Ministry of Higher Education
Qassim University
VICE PRESIDENTS OFFICE
For Graduate Studies and Research

Qassim University
جامعة القصيم

المملكة العربية السعودية
وزارة التعليم العالي
جامعة القصيم
مكتب وكيل الجامعة
لدراسات العليا والبحث العلمي
(٥٠)

التاريخ: ٢٢ / ٠٢ / ١٤٣٦ هـ
الرقم: ١١٥٣٦٠

الترقيات: ٢
الموضوع: بشأن الطلب المقدم من بدارفهد المهيلب بخصوص عمل استبيان

معادة الاستاذ الدكتور/ عميد كلية اللغة العربية والدراسات الاجتماعية
حفظه الله

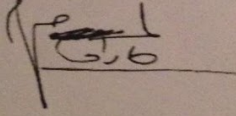
تسلم عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته ، وبعد

تدمرنا المبتعث / بدارفهد عبد العزيز المهيلب (٤٠٩٧٥٥) سجل مدني رقم (١٠٧٤٦٤٩٩٨٧)
طالب دراسات عليا (ماجستير) في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية بجامعة نيويورك ، والذي يرغب
سل استبيان مع أعضاء هيئة تدريس قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في كلية اللغة العربية والدراسات
اجتماعية في بريدة وبموضوع " Professors and Students Perceptions toward English
Language Writing Difficulties as a Foreign Language in Saudi Arabia at University Le

د سعادتك بالموافقة على ذلك على أن يباشر بنفسه وفريق العمل تطبيق الدراسة والالتزام
مانته العلمية وأخلاقيات البحث العلمي في تطبيق مثل هذه الدراسات وتزويد عمادة البحث العلمي
امعة بنسخة من الدراسة .

ولسعادتك خالص التحية والتقدير

وكيل الجامعة للدراسات العليا والبحث العلمي



عبد الرحمن بن صالح الواصل
١٤٣٦/٠٢/٢٢

لحق الثقافي السعودي بأمريكا

*Appendix D***CITI Certificate**

**COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI)
HUMAN RESEARCH CURRICULUM COMPLETION REPORT
Printed on 11/13/2014**

LEARNER	Badar Almuhaïib (ID: 3742350)
DEPARTMENT	TESOL
PHONE	716-673-3703
EMAIL	aimu5862@fredonia.edu
INSTITUTION	SUNY - College at Fredonia
EXPIRATION DATE	09/27/2015

GROUP 1.

COURSE/STAGE:	Basic Course/1
PASSED ON:	09/27/2013
REFERENCE ID:	11259903

REQUIRED MODULES	DATE COMPLETED
Introduction	09/27/13
History and Ethical Principles - SBE	09/27/13
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBE	09/27/13
The Federal Regulations - SBE	09/27/13
Assessing Risk - SBE	09/27/13
Informed Consent - SBE	09/27/13
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBE	09/27/13
Research with Prisoners - SBE	09/27/13
Research with Children - SBE	09/27/13
Research In Public Elementary and Secondary Schools - SBE	09/27/13
International Research - SBE	09/27/13
Internet-Based Research - SBE	09/27/13
Avoiding Group Harms - U.S. Research Perspectives	09/27/13
Vulnerable Subjects - Research Involving Workers/Employees	09/27/13
Conflicts of Interest In Research Involving Human Subjects	09/27/13
SUNY Fredonia State College	09/27/13

For this Completion Report to be valid, the learner listed above must be affiliated with a CITI Program participating institution or be a paid Independent Learner. Falsified information and unauthorized use of the CITI Program course sites is unethical, and may be considered research misconduct by your institution.

Paul Braunschweiger Ph.D.
Professor, University of Miami
Director Office of Research Education
CITI Program Course Coordinator

*Appendix E***Student's Consent Form**

Dear Student,

My name is Badar Almuhaulib and I am a graduate student at the State University of New York at Fredonia. I am enrolled in the TESOL program and am beginning the research for my Master's Thesis. The purpose my research is to examine professors' and students' perceptions toward English writing difficulties and the strategies professors use to help students cope with those difficulties.

I would like to ask you to participate in a survey which will last about 10-15 minutes. The survey will be distributed during your regular classes. You may answer all, some, or none of the questions.

There are no risks to you if you choose to take part in this research study. All information will be kept confidential. Participation in this survey is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time without fear of reprisal. At any time during the survey, you have the right to end it simply by saying so.

If you choose to take part in this survey, please sign below. By signing, you are confirming that you are at least eighteen years old, are aware of the voluntary aspect of this survey and are willing to participate. If you prefer not to participate, then you do not have to sign this.

I _____, do hereby give my consent to participate in the survey. I acknowledge that I am 18 years of age or older. I understand that participation in this study is voluntary; therefore I have the right to withdraw at any time and with no penalty. I understand that all the information gathered through the interview process will be coded, securely kept and remain confidential.

Signature of participant

Date

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact:

Badar Almuhaulib
SUNY Fredonia
Email: almu5862@fredonia.edu
Phone: (716) 679-6348 (U.S.)
Cell: 0536710000 (KSA)

Sovicheth Boun, PhD
Visiting Assistant Professor
SUNY Fredonia
Email: sovitcheth.boun@fredonia.edu
Phone: (716) 673-4988

*Appendix F***Professor's Consent Form**

Dear Professor,

My name is Badar Almuhaulib and I am a graduate student at the State University of New York at Fredonia. I am enrolled in the TESOL program and am beginning the research for my Master's Thesis. The purpose my research is to examine professors' and students' perceptions toward English writing difficulties and the strategies professors use to help students cope with those difficulties.

I would like to ask you to participate in an interview which will last about 60 minutes. The interview will take place in your office or any place of your choice. You may answer all, some, or none of the questions.

There are no risks to you if you choose to take part in this research study. All information will be kept confidential. I will be audio-taping the interview, but I will be transcribing the interview on paper afterwards and giving you a fake name to maintain your anonymity. The audiotapes will be destroyed after the interviews are transcribed.

Participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time without fear of reprisal. At any time during the interview, you have the right to end it simply by saying so.

If you choose to take part in this interview please sign below. By signing you are confirming that you are at least eighteen years old, are aware of the voluntary aspect of this interview and are willing to participate. If you prefer not to participate then you do not have to sign this.

I _____, do hereby give my consent to participate in the interview. I acknowledge that I am 18 years of age or older. I understand that participation in this study is voluntary; therefore I have the right to withdraw at any time and with no penalty. I understand that all the information gathered through the interview process will be coded, securely kept and remain confidential.

Signature of participant

Date

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact:

Badar Almuhaulib

Email: almu5862@fredonia.edu

Phone: (716) 679-6348 (U.S.)

Cell: 0536710000 (KSA)

Sovicheth Boun, PhD

Visiting Assistant Professor

SUNY Fredonia

Email: sovitcheth.boun@fredonia.edu

Phone: (716) 673-4988

Appendix G

Translated Survey into Arabic language

أعزائي الطلاب،

أهلاً بكم أنا بدر المهيلب طالب ماجستير في جامعة نيويورك في الولايات المتحدة. إذا أذنت لي أنت تشارك في هذا الاستبيان المتعلق بالصعوبات التي يواجهها الطلاب عند الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية في المستوى الجامعي في المملكة العربية السعودية. إذا تود المشاركة أكون لك ممتناً لو أتممت هذا الاستبيان، شكر الله سعيك مقدماً.

الصعوبات المتعلقة بتنظيم الكتاب

رقم	نوع الصعوبة الكتابية	أوافق بشدة	أوافق	محايد	لا أوافق	لا أوافق بشدة
1	كتابة المقدمة					
2	التخطيط للكتابة					
3	إيجاد الأفكار ذات الصلة بالموضوع المطلوب					
4	إيجاد الكلمة المناسبة للسياق					
5	كتابة الجملة قواعدياً بشكل صحيح					
6	استخدام الكلمات الرابطة بشكل صحيح					
7	كتابة الخاتمة					
8	كتابة المقال بشكل متناسق					

الصعوبات اللغوية

رقم	نوع الصعوبة الكتابية	أوافق بشدة	أوافق	محايد	لا أوافق	لا أوافق بشدة
1	الإملاء					
2	استخدام أدوات التعريف: the, an, a					
3	استخدام حروف الجر					
4	استخدام القواعد					
5	الأفعال الشاذة					
6	استخدام السوابق وأو اللواحق					
7	تركيب الجملة					
8	التفكير في اللغة العربية أثناء الكتابة بالإنجليزية					

أساليب تتبع لتفادي صعوبة الكتابة

رقم	الأسلوب	أوافق بشدة	أوافق	محايد	لا أوافق	لا أوافق بشدة
1	قراءة الكتب الإنجليزية بكثرة لاطور مهاراتي الكتابية					
2	أرفع من مستوى مخزون المفردات لدي					
3	اكتشاف وتحليل أخطاء الطلاب من قبل الأساتذة					
4	أمارس الكتابة باستمرار					
5	أنضم إلى دورات مكثفة لتعليم الكتابة خارج نطاق الجامعة					

6	استخدام القاموس بكثرة					
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