



## **Effectiveness of Instructional Program on Developing First Common Years Students Writing Skills**

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### **Abstract**

The aim of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of English instructional program on developing first common year students writing skills at Aljouf university, Saudi Arabia. The researcher conducted qualitative and quantitative study. The participants of the study consisted of (11) experts in the field of instructional strategies and developmental of techniques and 57 students whose English language level was elementary. (35) English lessons and some activities were implemented and taught to students of two groups in the first semester of academic year (2018-2019). Two questionnaires were designed to investigate respondents' views about the program, and pre and post tests were also designed and applied to investigate the effectiveness of the program. The results of the pre and post tests were significantly different in the two groups of writing in favor of the post test. Besides, the questionnaire results respondents shown great satisfaction on the program. Based on these results, the study recommends the necessity of English language programs in learning and teaching writing skills. It also suggests that further researches should be conducted on the effects of English programs on developing students' writing skill.

**Keywords:** English Instructional Program (EIP), writing skills ,Aljouf University.



## المخلص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى دراسة مدى فاعلية برنامج اللغة الإنجليزية في تطوير مهارات الكتابة لطلبة السنة الأولى المشتركة في جامعة الجوف بالمملكة العربية السعودية. أجرى الباحث دراسة نوعية وكمية. تألف المشاركون في الدراسة من (١١) خبيراً في مجال الاستراتيجيات التدريسية وتنمية التقنيات و٥٧ طالباً كان مستوى لغتهم الإنجليزية الابتدائي. تم تدريس (٣٥) من دروس اللغة الإنجليزية وبعض الأنشطة لمجموعتين من الطلاب في الفصل الدراسي الأول من العام الدراسي (٢٠١٩-٢٠١٨). وتم تصميم استبيانين للتحقيق من آراء المستطلعين حول البرنامج، كما تم تصميم وتطبيق اختبار قبلي وبعدي وذلك للتحقيق من فاعلية البرنامج. كانت نتيجة الاختبار القبلي والبعدي مختلفة بشكل كبير في مجموعتي الكتابة لصالح الاختبار البعدي. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، أظهرت نتائج الاستبيان رضا كبير من المستطلعين حول البرنامج. بناءً على هذه النتائج، توصي الدراسة بضرورة برامج اللغة الإنجليزية في تعلم وتدريس مهارات الكتابة. كما يقترح أيضاً إجراء المزيد من الأبحاث حول تأثيرات برامج اللغة الإنجليزية على تنمية مهارات الكتابة لدى الطلاب.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** البرنامج التعليمي للغة الإنجليزية (EIP) ، مهارات الكتابة، جامعة الجوف.



## 1.Introduction

Writing is one of the most important skills in learning a new language. It's a productive skill, so we use writing to express our self or to interact with other. However, it is considered to be a difficult skill, particularly in case of studying second languages or foreign languages contexts where students can face many challenges.

In the context of second language (L2) or foreign language (EFL) learning, the difficulties of writing do not only lie in creating and organizing the idea, but also in translating the idea into writing. Thus, many researchers and linguists try to cover different writing areas in order to find solution for specific writing problems or at least to define the area of difficulties and the way that they can solve it.

Richard and Renandya (2002 - p. 239) explain that mastering writing skill is the most difficult for L2 learners. Learners have to get involved on higher-level skills of planning and organizing as well as lower level skills of spelling, punctuation, word choices and so on. Thus, this study aims to find the basic reasons for writing difficulties and how to solve them.

Nunan (1989, p.36), writing is an extremely complex cognitive activity in which the writer is required to demonstrate control of variables simultaneously.



At the sentence level, these include control of contents, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, spelling and letter formation. Beyond the sentence, the writer must be able to structure and integrate information into cohesive and coherent paragraph and text. Based of the developed new program, there are many factors ththat can affect learning writing skills. In this study, the researcher has discussed them suporately.

White and Arndt (1991, p. 3) take: “Writing is far from being a simple matter of transcribing language into written symbols: it is thinking process in its own right. It is a permanent record, as a form of expression and as a means of communication.

From the above citations, writing could be perceived as a complex process that requires many skills like mental, psychological, rhetorical and critical aspects. Writing is the system of written symbols which represents the sounds, syllables or words of language. Writing skill requires different mechanisms as capitalization, spelling and punctuation, word form and function. It helps to convey the meaning clearly. So, writing is an activity to improve our understanding of any subject. Writing is the ability not only to put ideas from mind to paper but also to generate more meaning and make ideas clear. Writing demands conscious intellectual effort, which usually has to be sustained over a considerable period of time.



Wilde (1990) suggested that the best way to appreciation for the dullness of some common spelling exercises is to imagine yourself in the students' place, completing the following types of activities to practice the spelling of a word: unscrambling it, writing it in an incomplete sentence, writing it in response to a definition, and writing it in response to a description (i.e., "has double letters"). She argues that such exercises are not only boring and pointless, but inefficient as well.

Graham, Steve; Harris, Karen (2014) - (Writing Better: Effective Strategies for Teaching Students with Learning Difficulties).

Whether they have learning disabilities or just need extra help, struggling writers can improve their skills dramatically if they get the detailed, explicit instruction they need. School teachers should know how to make this systematic instruction part of their classroom. Educators will find a wide range of specific strategies that include: (1) activities for every phase of the writing process, from brainstorming and goal-setting to revising; (2) proof of effectiveness with students who have learning disabilities (field testing data included); (3) guidelines on how to teach the strategies and use them across grades; (4) easy-to-learn formats for students, such as mnemonic devices and short step-by-step action plans; (5) exercises specially tailored for different types of writing, including stories, explanations, persuasive essays, reports, and comparisons; and (6) everything teachers need--no additional materials necessary Programs of strategy-focused instruction tend



to have multiple components, and these vary to some extent across different implementation.

Pressley and Harris, 2006; Harris et al., 2011. However, instruction typically includes activities aimed at activating relevant prior knowledge, direct instruction aimed at giving declarative meta-knowledge about appropriate writing strategies, typically based around various mnemonics, modeling of writing strategies in which the instructor “thinks aloud” in front of learners demonstrating a strategy while composing, and scaffolder practice. Writing is also cognitively demanding: the processes associated with text production must be coordinated within the constraints imposed by a limited capacity of working memory.

, 1999; McCutchen, 1996; Torrance and Galbraith, Kellogg, 1988 2006. Therefore, writers must coordinate several cognitively costly activities including retrieval of prior knowledge, planning and structuring content, formulating sentences, and monitoring output. At the same time, writers need to maintain in mind their communicative goals and the needs of their audience.

Cohen and Manion’s (1985, p. 87 as cited in Cohen et al. 2010) view, action research is conducted aiming at the improvement of the current affairs through the processes of identifying and solving problem in a specific context.

As a classroom investigation based research, it carried out to find out and solve the specific problems here and now in local setting.



It is a joint venture of language practitioner and researcher in a practical way. The main aim of the action research is to improve the current state of affairs within the educational context in which research is being carried out. Action research ultimately solves the practical problems of an academic context by bridging gap between theory and practice. It is a practical process of identifying, recognizing and solving the programs in the scientific way. It always orients towards the results change of certain phenomena, situation or issues.

Through discussing the studies conducted, it can be noted that the grammar as a main concern in writing competency is the most common error of the students. However, in a study on teaching low – level ESL students' composition, Taylor (1976) claims that writing abilities does not only include paragraphs that are “well defined, brief, sensible and persuasive or may contain good grammatical sentences” (p.33). Taylor argues that writing good sentences is not a measurement of a well written work but requires intertwining of these sentences in one cohesive thought. However, these writing problems are not only committed by EFL or ESL learners, because according to Thomas (1963) that even average students cannot execute correct spelling, punctuation marks, and good sentence construction. With regard to this finding, Taylor (1976) suggests that training in English writing should not be limited to ESL but to native speakers as well. Based on the views above, we can notice that grammar errors are the most common in students' writing.



Msanjila (2005) In her investigation, conducted a study on the students of Morogoro Secondary Schools in Tanzania to explore the six glaring writing problems such as capitalization and punctuation problems, inexplicitness or fuzziness, poor organization or illogical sequence, spelling problems and grammatical errors. Similar to this investigation is the study of Chen (2002; in Mojica, 2010); he used freshmen and sophomore Taiwanese students' through letting his participants write a self-reflective report on writing problems in English. Chen's result of the study is the following (in Mojica, 2005; Chen, 2002):

(1) Word usage and English expressions, (2) confusion about the subtle differences among similar words due to insufficient cultural knowledge, limited vocabulary, (4) grammatical errors, (5) organization, (6) errors on prepositions (idioms) or slang, (7) L1 influence, and (8) independent thinking – ranging from lexical, syntactic levels to rhetorical and cultural levels. (p.26).

Al-Hamza and Scofield (2007) conducted a study on Saudi University students. They enforced used of checklist and peer feedback in EFL writing to determine the difficulties of their samples experienced in ESL writing. In their study, they found out that basic English language problems as well as discourse organization, paragraphing and cohesion are the main problems of EFL learners. Meanwhile, Lozada and Magsangya (2009) investigated on the errors committed by sophomore students and their relationship to their English Language exposure.





They used one hundred sixty (160) high school students to answer the checklist and asked to write an essay on a given topic. Results show that the students with high exposure have significantly less frequency in their errors , wrong case, fragmentation, parallelism, punctuation and verb tense.

Nunan (1989, p.36), writing is an extremely complex cognitive activity in which the writer is required to demonstrate control of variables simultaneously. At the sentence level, these include control of contents, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, spelling and letter formation. Beyond the sentence, the writer must be able to structure and integrate information into cohesive and coherent paragraph and text.

Rivers (1968, p.243), writing refers to the expression of ideas in a systematic way to organize the graphic conventions of the language; the ultimate aim of a writer at this stage is to be able to express him in a polished literary form which requires the utilization of a special vocabulary and certain refinement structure. Furthermore, Jordan (1999, p.41) takes writing as, “...the method of human inters developing communication by means of conventionally visible marks”. Similarly, White and Arndt (1991, p. 3) take: “Writing is far from being a simple matter of transcribing language into written symbols: it is thinking process in its own right. It is a permanent record, as a form of expression and as a means of communication.



From the above citations, writing could be perceived as a complex process that requires many skills like mental, psychological, rhetorical and critical aspects. Writing is the system of written symbols which represents the sounds, syllables or words of language. Writing skill requires different mechanisms as capitalization, spelling and punctuation, word form and function. It helps to convey the meaning clearly. So, writing is an activity to improve our understanding of any subject. Writing is the ability not only to put ideas from mind to paper but also to generate more meaning and make ideas clear. Writing demands conscious intellectual effort, which usually has to be sustained over a considerable period of time.

Brant (1946) states that standard of satisfaction among language educators on the written works of language learners are good grammatical structures, appropriate punctuation marks, verbs in their right tenses, pronouns in the right case and correct spelling of words. On the other hand, the skills on “handwriting, spelling, vocabulary, sentence construction, and paragraph writing” primarily contribute to the overall writing quality. These skills are seemingly considered as the “building blocks of proficient writing,” students who fail to develop these skills are at risk for writing difficulties.

Graham and Perin, 2007; Graham et al., 2012; Graham and Harris, 2014) have indicated that strategy-focused writing instruction is



the most effective approach to improve students writing, relative to the other types on instruction identified in their meta-analyses, with typically large positive effects on the quality of students' texts. This approach aims to give students explicit strategies for regulating both what they write and the processes that they adopt when writing it.

Alexander et al., 1998; Harris et al., 2008

Programs of strategy-focused instruction tend to have multiple components, and these vary to some extent across different implementations (Pressley and Harris, 2006; Harris et al., 2011). However, instruction typically includes activities aimed at activating relevant prior knowledge, direct instruction aimed at giving declarative meta-knowledge about appropriate writing strategies, typically based around various mnemonics, modeling of writing strategies in which the instructor “thinks aloud” in front of learners demonstrating a strategy while composing, and scaffolder practice.

Pressley and Hrris,2006; Graham and Covill, Hoynes, and Mildes (1994) found that writers with high working memory capacity (assessed with a writing span task) produced better texts than writers with low working memory. Importantly, this difference was less important when working memory capacity was assessed with a reading span task, which does not rely on efficiency of sentence generation as the writing span task does. Writing span



was even more closely related to writing quality when the sentences had to form a story. In addition, writing span was related to lexical retrieval. McCutchen et al. concluded that greater efficiency in translating results in freed up working memory capacity, and thus, in a better writing performance. To account for these findings, McCutchen (1996) proposed the capacity theory of writing, which was inspired by Daneman and Carpenter (1980) and Just and Carpenter (1992). In that framework, skilled writing requires efficient management of working memory capacity to provide an opportunity for interaction among the writing processes (McCutchen, 1988, 1994).

Brown (1994, p. 335) noted that some processes such as thinking, drafting, and revising should be conducted in the process of writing. Thus, writing is a long process because it needs to be developed to enhance the quality of a writing itself. Sentence structure, word choice, verb tense, noun endings (singular/plural), and also verb form are top five of grammatical errors made by language learner.

(Ferris & Roberts, 2001 p. 169. Therefore, grammar mastery and positive reinforcement in writing is also important since it leads to developing confidence in writing. In ESL teaching, teacher feedback on students' writing is very important because errors in writing cannot be avoided.



Hyland (2006, p.88) stated that providing feedback is one of the most important tasks for an ESL teacher. Teacher feedback is expected to help the students to decrease or even eliminate some errors that appear in their writing. Teacher feedback in the writing process is expected to give significance improvement in students' writing and reduce grammatical errors which occur in the writing. the process of revising drafts in a writing process.

Purwandari (2012, p. 18) in her research about narrative essay writing, she mentioned that teacher role is not optimal in guiding the students in the writing process and the teacher also does not provide appropriate example or writing technique before conducting writing activity. The teacher prefers to do administrative task or check on students' exam result during the process of writing. Based on the point above, the research conducted this study to investigate the effectiveness of the instructional program on developing writing skills for pre intermediate levels students and to find a feedback of students learning outcome.

Keh (1990, p.294) defined feedback as revising which is provided by the reader and it contains information for revision. Keh also



mentioned that feedback is fundamental element in the process of writing. According to Hattie & Timperley (2007, p.81), feedback is information provided by an agent (e.g., teacher, peer, book, parent, self, experience) regarding aspects of one's performance. On learning and achievement, feedback gives the most powerful influences because it provides corrective information for learners about their performances (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 81). Purnawarman (2011, p.1) further explained that feedback provides students with information about what is good and what needs to be improved in their writing. Students receive feedback from source or combination of sources, this feedback is used by students in their revisions and in the final product of their writing.

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Hyland (2006, p. 83) noted that feedback is essential for the development of second language writing skills. It means that feedback has significant role in second language writing because it provides information for learner in the process of writing. Furthermore, the role of feedback in writing is important because occurrence of errors in students' writing is unavoidable and feedback will improve the quality of students' writing. According to Hyland (2006, p.83) feedback which is provided by teacher in genre classroom is an important thing because it builds the literacy resources to involve in target communities and also learner's confidence.



Corder (1976, p.163) errors are significant of three things, first to the teacher, in that they tell him, if he or she undertakes a systematic analysis, how far towards that goal the learner has progressed and, consequently, what remains for him to learn. Second, they provide the researcher with evidence of how language is learned or acquired, and what strategies or procedures the learner is employing in his discovery of the language. Third (and in a sense this is their most important aspect) they are indispensable to the learner himself, because we can regard the making of errors as a device the learner uses in order to learn. The occurrence of errors is merely signs of ‘the present inadequacy of our teaching methods’.

Chomsky (1956, p. 4). made a distinguishing explanation of competence and performance on which, later on, the identification of Mistakes and Errors will be possible, Chomsky stated that ‘We thus make a fundamental distinction between competence (the speaker-hearer's knowledge of his language) and performance (the actual use of language in concrete situations)’. In other words, errors are thought of as indications of an incomplete learning, and that the speaker or hearer has not yet accumulated a satisfied language knowledge which can enable them to avoid linguistics misuse. Relating knowledge with competence was significant enough to represent that the competence of the speaker is judged by means of errors that concern the amount of linguistic data he or she has been exposed to, however, performance which is the



actual use of language does not represent the language knowledge that the speaker has.

## **2.Methods and Procedure**

In this chapter the research methodology is described in terms of procedure and data collection tools. It aims to achieve the purposes and the aims of the study. The researcher designed an English language Instructional program consisted of 35 lessons and different activities to identify students' errors and mistakes of writing. Moreover, the researcher used two questionnaires to investigate students and experts' views towards the program. Besides, the researcher also used pre and posttest English language tests to investigate the effective ness of the program.

### **2.1. Participants of the study**

The participants of the study consisted of (11) experts in the field of instructional strategies and developmental of techniques and 57 students in the first common years, Aljuf university, Saudi Arab. Their ages were ranged between 18-20 during the academic year 2018-2019. As for the experts, their work experiences ranged between 5-20 years.

### **2.2. Variables of the study**





In this study, the variables are defined as independent and in dependent variables. Independent variable is represented in the instructional program and writing skills, whereas dependent variables represented in the first common year student's development in writing skills.

### **2.3. Materials and instruments of the study**

The researcher used the following instrument in this study:

- a. experts and teacher's questionnaires
  - b. pre-posttest in writing
  - c. teacher's guide.
- d. The instructional program

#### **2.3.1. The two questionnaires**

The questionnaire aimed to investigate respondents' views toward the program. The questionnaire was constructed based on the following:

1. Reviewing the previous questionnaires results that related to the effect of English language program on developing writing skills for pre intermediate students.
2. Consulting (11) experts in the field of instructional strategies and developmental of techniques about the questions and designing of questionnaire.
3. Reviewing the English curriculum for fist common years regarding students' level.

#### **Questionnaire validity**



To validate the questionnaire, it was submitted to the academics and educational experts in order to investigate its clarity and suitability to students' level. Based on their recommendations, the researcher was designed the questionnaire.

### **2.3.2. Pre-posttests of writing**

The pre and posttest aim to define participants' knowledge and level of writing and find out the expected develop in their writing skills after getting the program. The tests were constructed base on the following:

1. Reviewing the previous studies and ESL tests of writing skills.
2. Reviewing the literature of teaching writing and curriculum development.

The pretest is consisted of 5 different writing topics, students were allowed to write 5 different paragraph based on the lessons that they were taught and each paragraph should not be less than 100 words. To validate the tests, the researcher submitted them to the jury of academic specialist who are specialized in curriculum and methodology and other native teachers who teach English as second language at jouniversity. The jury members and the teachers were requested to judge the clarity of the questions and their suitability to students' levels and the area that the test aimed to measure. Based on their recommendation and advices, the tests were designed In order to measure the test-retest reliability, the researcher computed the reliability before administrating the test to participants. The test was given as first test (T1) to 57 students on june,2017. And then six week later, the same test is given as second test (T2) to the same group under the same conditions.



Then, the correlation coefficient between the first and the second administrations of the test was calculated using the correlation coefficient analysis. The scores on two occasions were perfectly correlated.(referred to tables (3)and (4).The reliability coefficient Was between 0,9-0,8 as shown in table (6) which was statistically significant, therefor the test is reliable.

**2.3.3.** The instructional program guideline in order to achieve the objectives of the study, the researcher followed the following guideline: a. selected suitable teaching aids for teaching writing. b. used appropriate materials and aids for teaching writing skills lesson. c. Defined clear learning objectives based on the program need. d. taught different activities and lessons in writing based on students' needs and study objectives. Based on the teacher knowledge and student needs, the researcher developed this program. Moreover, experts and others teachers' views have great influence on developing this program.

The researcher has followed a certain plan to guide him to conduct this program. the plan includes the objectives , procedure, teaching activities and some English lessons and students were asked to follows a certain instruction.

The researcher prepared a context for regular, meaningful writing consists of 35 English lessons in writing and about 44 different



activates in writing based on student's curriculum and levels to discover the area of writing weakness and to develop them. The focus of students' writing was on spelling, handwriting and sentence formation. The lessons and activities were taught in the first semester of academic year 2017. The program consists of 7 units each unit consist of 5 lessons and five activities as well. In addition to that, the researcher uses instruction and strategies for planning, revising, and self-regulation during the writing process. Attention to development of motivation for writing.

### 3. Conclusion

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