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Investigating Secondary School Students' Views Regarding the Use of Strategies and Difficulties They Face When Writing in English as the Second Language

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INVESTIGATING SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' VIEWS REGARDING

THE USE OF STRATEGIES AND DIFFICULTIES THEY FACE WHEN

WRITING IN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

By

Salma Saeed Salem Al Kaabi

A Thesis Submitted to

United Arab Emirates University

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of Education

Curriculum and Instruction: English Language

May 2014

i

THESIS TITLE

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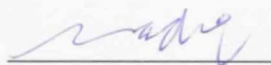
DATE OF SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE:

May 11, 2014

THE THESIS HAS BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE THESIS COMMITTEE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

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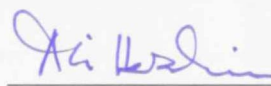
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Abstract

Learning writing is an important element in language acquisition. Writing is one of the tools of communication and exchanges between cultures. Many students have a negative attitude toward writing and consider writing as the most difficult skill of all. Writing in English is an issue from which many non-native students suffer. This study aims to investigate students' views toward the use of strategies and the challenges they face with writing in English.

This study was conducted in one of the large female high schools in Al Ain. A 45 items structured Likert-scale questionnaire was developed. It was administered to 360 students to measure their views regarding writing difficulties and strategies.

The questionnaire discovered that the vocabulary and language mechanics, especially punctuation, are the most serious problems students face when writing in English. However, the students also have spelling and grammar difficulties. Moreover, the study revealed that group work, brainstorming and planning are the best techniques that improve students' writing. Some students use reading as one important strategy to improve their writing.

In addition, students view writing in English as a very difficult skill and they become easily distracted when writing in English. The study showed that students prefer to write in an informal language rather than an academic language. Students consider that providing feedback is valuable, but they prefer receiving feedback from their friends more than from their teachers because teachers' feedback is usually associated with marks.

One important suggestion based on the study's findings is to focus on punctuation, vocabulary and sentence structure from the early stage of learning writing skills. Another suggestion based on the results of the study is about giving feedback for all writing's mistakes. Finally, this study suggested that strategies such as planning and brainstorming are crucial parts of writing successfully, and it should be taken as one of the most important components.

Chapter One

Introduction

Writing is a challenging task in learning any language. Rodgers (2012) identified writing as a graphic representation of language and a way of communication. He indicated that writing consists of three dimensions: what to write, why you write, and how to write.

Writing is the most challenging skill ESL students face (Tangpermpoon, 2008). Writing well requires confidence. In addition to student experience, background knowledge and vocabulary are essential component to writing well. Students usually lack one or all of these basic elements, which leads to increased struggles later on.

Bello (1997) indicated that writing is a way to communicate one's thoughts and feelings effectively by using language in certain ways. He said that writing in both first and second languages is incredibly challenging. Writing is an effective way for second language learners to activate other components of English language, like grammar and vocabulary. He said that writing enhances language acquisition as learners become more familiar with ways to convey their ideas effectively using grammar and vocabulary they learned in writing class.

Writing requires more basic skills than any other subject area. The developmental stages of students should be taken into account when teaching the writing process. Teachers should teach writing through a series of steps that build on a student's learning experience and background knowledge.

Writers use second language standards which govern their way of writing, and try to avoid first language interference. They go through a specific process including choosing a topic related to the theme, brainstorming, researching, paraphrasing, summarizing, quoting, and finally

writing. All these strategies are applied by students under the supervision of and facilitation from their teacher.

Therefore, students must learn or have the skills acquired from their previous experiences, and knowledge. Their communication depends on the amount of vocabulary they have acquired. Learners should have sufficient knowledge of how to pick a topic, brainstorm and summarize. All these strategies require cognitive skills and varied vocabulary.

Writing skills are acquired through many ways, and each person has a different style and voices. Tangpermpoon (2008) indicated that writing is the most difficult skill because this skill requires background and lexical and syntactic knowledge. As writing skills advance, so does confidence for the struggling writer.

Novice writers need to think critically and then use the language as a tool to express their ideas. Alter and Adkin (2001) mentioned that critical thinking helps students to solve their writing problems. Being able to express oneself is more critical to improving writing skills than being error- free. They indicated criteria that focus on sentences, paragraphs, usage, and mechanics. They outlined that writing skills must be integrated with course content.

Educators reported that the learning environment focuses on early reading and cognitive skills which are techniques that help to improve language achievement. However, linguistic skills are an important base of building reading and writing skills. Previous knowledge and experience are essential elements that help improve or create new skills by building on and modifying existing skills. (Scientific Learning Corporation, 2007)

Problem Statement

Learning writing is a challenging skill in both first and second languages. Many researchers found that teachers think writing is one the most difficult to be taught or learned. Tangpermpoon (2008) indicated that writing is the most difficult skill that learners face when learning a language. In fact, students find writing as the most challenging obstacle they face when learning a second language. In the UAE, students have problems with writing, just as any learner of English as second language. They face difficulties because first language interference and cultural differences. From my own experience as an English teacher, I see students struggle with writing. They find writing in English difficult and challenging because they lack basic skills necessary to write well. Problems in writing make an interesting research question because of the potential benefit for both teachers and students. Many educators support the idea that writing is a challenging skill for students in terms of content and spelling.

Many studies have focused on writing difficulties in ESL/EFL because it is an important issue in acquiring a second language. Researchers investigate why writing is a difficult skill and how educators attempt to solve this problem, focusing on organization and convention. Ghabool, Edwina and Kashef (2012) showed that students in Malaysia have problems with writing in general, and mostly in punctuation and language use. Al-Abri (nd) found that many students in Oman are struggling with some areas in writing mostly with spelling, verb tense and vocabulary. Learners generally agree that their problems are in grammar and vocabulary. (Al-Abri, nd)

According to the results, Sarsar (2008) indicated that students in UAE Model Schools reveal poor writing skills, and clearly show the problems they have with writing which might lead them to literacy failure. Some students fail because of misguided teaching practices and ineffective

pedagogies. Agata (2011) studied spelling mistakes made by second language learners in level three at the UAE University, United Arab Emirates. She found that the spelling mistakes are categorized into four different parts: omission or substitution of vowels and consonants, pronunciation, transposition, and insertion.

Giridharan and Robson (2011) identified the gaps in academic writing standards among ESL students in a foundation program in the United States. They found that students struggled with basic criteria of writing like vocabulary, mechanics, planning and organizing. Many studies found that second language learners have an inadequate base in writing conventions.

Dowling (2011) indicated that students in the UAE, especially those in foundation courses, were struggling with writing skills because of their limited knowledge of L2 and inability to create their own ideas. These findings on UAE's students reflect the lack of basic knowledge that students gained through Cycle Three. It is clear that students who enrolled at universities need to be qualified and prepared well within the basic language.

Another point to raise here is that students and even parents face problems when writing because of their low language proficiency. Students lack of the basic skills which could qualify them to write well. In this case, students need help from other people such as their parents. Being able to write well becomes an issue that concerns educators, parents and students, especially with the low results of the Common Educational Proficiency Assessment, CEPA, exam which is considered for enrollment at universities in the UAE. Thus, it is crucial to know about students' views on their writing skills. There are few studies that deal with students' views of their own writing. Previous studies, for example, focused on the approaches or strategies of learning writing. However, a few studies examined the students' views, especially within the UAE

context, regarding their writing difficulties. Ismail (2011) found that students in the UAE are aware of their level in English and consider academic writing a challenging task.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate students' views regarding their writing strategies and common writing difficulties.

Research Questions

This study attempts to investigate the following questions:

What kind of difficulties/barriers do students face when writing in English?

What strategies do students use when writing in English?

How do students view their abilities in writing in English?

Significance of the Study

This study is beneficial for many educators and policymakers in the UAE in terms of planning critical aspects of the writing curriculum.

Agata (2011) found that most types of spelling mistakes made by second language learners in Level Three at the UAE University were in substitution, omission, and insertion categories. Dowling (2011) revealed that students in the UAE were struggling with writing because of their poor knowledge of English and ability to generate ideas.

There are only a few studies that deal with the writing difficulties within the UAE context. Therefore, the importance of this study is to help teachers in the UAE find ways to help students learn to and overcome difficulties in writing by reflecting on students' views of these difficulties.

In addition, this study should help teachers recognize the most complicated aspects of writing, and discover their students' needs and work to fix them. Students should become meta-cognitive about their learning. This study would give data for policymakers and curriculum designers in the UAE to design the language base of curriculum for primary grades.

Definition of Terms

ADEC (Abu Dhabi Education Council)

Writing difficulties measured the satisfaction of students toward writing tasks.

Writing skills are the abilities a student has or acquires through certain learning experiences.

Students' views measure the students' attitude toward their writing work.

Writing strategies are techniques used by students and teachers to facilitate the writing process.

21st century skills are completed concept for the knowledge, skills and dispositions citizens need to be able to contribute to the knowledge society. Voogt and Roblin (2011)

First language interference is the amount of misunderstanding between both languages in term of the meaning, use of language and its function in a given situation.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter reviews previous studies related to different categories of writing strategies, theories, difficulties that students have which hinder their writing, and the most common errors students make in writing. Moreover, there is a review of the effects of the first language, and students' views about writing. The information was collected from different resources such as journals, e-books, and electronic abstracts. There is no time limit for the literatures that are reviewed.

Theoretical Background

Writing skills are the contextualized activity which is related to the culture of the writer who produces it. Juan, Martinez-Flor, and Silveira, (2006) identified writing as a dynamic interaction among the three basic elements included text, writer, and reader. There is a role of social and contextual factors to create a piece of writing. Writing can help learners develop their communicative competence. Many authors discussed writing within the following theories and approaches.

i. Cognitive Theory

According to cognitive theory, writing is the process used when the writers, according to their abilities, could make decision to move the text forward. Mu, Congjun (2005) discussed that the writing process goes through meta-cognitive and cognitive strategies in which the

writers controls the process consciously or uses these strategies to implement actual writing actions.

Cognitive processes consist of thinking aloud to find the stages of writing and generate a creative task. Juan, Martínez-Flor and Silveira, (2006) discussed Cognitive Model of writing. The first stage is the *planning stage* which consists of generating ideas, organizing ideas, and setting goals for writing. The second one is the *translating stage* which means writing down their thoughts and feelings. The final stage is the *reviewing stage* which is about evaluating and revising the text.

Eroglu (2009) discussed according to Piaget that knowledge is built in the learner's mind with support from the interaction with the world. Whenever the teacher creates the situation, the learners link them to their prior knowledge. This means a paradigm shift toward minimizing the focus on grammar and spelling. The emphasis is on personality, creativity, and fluency. The errors are corrected in the final stage.

ii. Writing within an Interactionist Approach

This approach is based on the socio-cultural context, the interaction between text, the writer's knowledge and the culture of readers' prior knowledge which makes the writing more coherent. Juan, Martínez-Flor, and Silveira, (2006) explained the interaction model cycle with writing which plays a crucial role in accelerating the acquisition of communicative competence. They showed that different components (Linguistic competence, Strategic competence, Intercultural competence, discourse competence) influence the development of the writing skills in order to increase learners' overall communicative ability. Thus if the

learners qualified on most of these components and were able to use them in their writing, they would be able to communicate more effectively in a second language.

iii. Social Constructivism

Social constructivists believe that a person could not find or discover ideas, model, and knowledge unless s/he constructs them. In social constructivism, one considers both the product and process approaches. Writers in product approach perspective use others' writing to help them construct meaning. The writer interacts with the model to construct a new text. However, writers with process approach perspective use exchanging knowledge through a different process of brainstorming, collaboration, planning, evaluation and reflection. That then helps the writer to construct their text (Mu, Congjun, 2005).

The idea of social constructivism is suitable when the learner has to write within the zone of proximal development, which is within the current level of students' intellectual capability. Learner seeks help and support from his/her peers for their writing performance. Through interaction with others, writers use social strategies which affect them in term of emotions, motivation, attitude and support (Mu, Congjun, 2005).

According to Vygotsky constructivism is that knowledge gained through interaction with the environment, exchanges between cultures, and knowledge. Another emphasis is on collaborative work when the learners exchange knowledge and construct new knowledge that the learners gain through collaborative work (Eroglu, 2009).

Eroglu (2009) discussed the constructivism theory and the importance of not ignoring the previous experiences and the background of a student. It is important to help a student become meta-cognitive about their own life and use that library of experience in an academic

setting. Eroglu discussed Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories about cognitive and social constructivism. Piaget's theory depends on the cognitive knowledge a student uncovers in his mind. On the other hand, Vygotsky theory depends on constructing the knowledge through social activities and the interaction with others. Eroglu explained how to apply the constructivist approach in the writing pedagogy. They suggest using these foundational skills to help write a paragraph, and learn essay basics. After that, they suggest to create an argumentative essay, and then critical reading. The final stage is to assist students in writing a report. Students can autonomously write assignments and professional reports from this point forward.

These are the most important basic theories to understand the process of writing, and how learners are able to communicate through this skill. For example, students are involved in the process of thinking to interact with other factors to achieve this task. Thus recognizing the basic knowledge of the writing process would help us to explain and interpret the perspective of students toward this task. This knowledge in processing information is called cognitive knowledge, while being able to interact and to be involved in a communicative atmosphere is considered communicative knowledge. Therefore, if the students are able to process their information and are aware of the communication through writing, they would be able to reflect on their own learning. They consider that there are three dimensions of the communication: the writer, text and the audience. Thus, they are able to know their abilities in writing and are able to know why their writing task is difficult.

Knowing the barriers of writing tasks through students' views and perspectives would be more beneficial for both students and teachers. Teachers would be able to change their

methods according to students' needs. Students would also benefit by reflecting on their own needs.

Writing Approaches

There are techniques which are used to help learners to write well. These are called writing approaches. Writing approaches are effective methods used in writing. Each approach has its own bath to learning. Most of the approaches depend on the student's language level. These approaches include product-based approach, process-based approach, and genre approach.

1. **Product-Based Approach**

Product-based approach needs basic knowledge in language features which enable the learner to produce quality writing. Product-based approach requires basic knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure to express the ideas in sentences and having a correct written text.

Tangpermpoon (2008) indicated that writing is the most difficult skill because it requires the writer's background knowledge and his/her ability to expand his/her lexical and syntactic verbal library. Tangermpoon discussed some writing approaches like the product-based approach which depends on several activities that support writing in terms of grammar and syntax; for example: paragraphs, sentence-combining and rhetorical patterns exercises. It is to be noted that this approach focuses on structures without giving any consideration on the importance of motivation for the writers to write about their experiences. Meaning is a second concern in product approach after focusing on the content of the product.

Badger and White (2000) identified the product-based approach simply as it relies on the knowledge of language and producing written text through a model. They said, "product-based approaches see writing as mainly concerned with knowledge about the structure of language, and writing development as mainly the result of the imitation of input, in the form of texts provided by the teacher" P 2.

2. Process-Based Approach

The process-based approach requires specific steps to create a text. In this approach, the teacher involves students in a process including planning, first draft, and reflecting. Students are involved in many stages to achieve a piece of writing that help them become familiar with their writing topic and organize the components of their writing task.

Process-based approaches indicate that there are many stages in writing a text. One focuses on meaning and ideas instead of grammar. These steps show the development in writing skills through a process that include prewriting, first draft, composing-feedback, second draft writing, and proofreading. This approach motivated students to write freely instead of being concerned about technical errors (Tangpermpoon, 2008).

Simpson (2012) found that writing is a process that includes several steps; namely, selecting a topic and planning what to say, writing the first draft, revising and editing, and evaluating. Simpson discussed the differences between product and process approaches. So, while product approach focuses on what the learner could copy from the model given by the teacher, process approach focuses on steps learners follow to compose a written text. This approach helps the learners to express themselves and motivate them to write without being overly concerned with grammar.

Onozawa (2010) indicated that the process approach is a way that is given to the writer through different stages of planning, revising, reflecting and editing to produce a final product. This approach leads to focus on fluency rather than accuracy. Onozawa found that one important advantage of the process approach is motivating students to write.

Steele (2004) discussed the differences between both approaches. While in process writing, text model is used as resource for comparison, in product writing it is used for imitation. Product writing has one draft, but process writing has more than one draft. In product writing, organizing the ideas is more important than the ideas themselves. However, in process writing the ideas are most important. Product approach emphasizes final product, whereas process approach emphasizes the creative process.

3. Genre- Based Approach

Genre- based approach is used when students can perceive the differences in a structure and apply what they have learned to their own writing. The students have a model and then they write with their teacher. That encourages a sense of society because they work with each other and then with their teacher. Badger and White (2000) support that writing happens in a social situation and learning occurs through imitation and analysis. They indicated that there are three stages in genre approaches. The first stage is model and analysis, the second stage consists of practicing, and the final stage which consists of producing the text. Badger and White (2000) identified genre as using specific language features in writing that vary with social contexts. Various kinds of genre such as report, research, and letter writing are linked with different situations. Genre types have different purposes depending on writer-audience relationship, subject features, and the pattern or structure of organization.

Tangpermpoon (2008) also discussed genre-based approaches which help to share knowledge in certain forms and to communicate in a written form based on the purpose of the writer and the audience. According to this approach writers are able to choose the suitable structures and language of a task when they are able to determine the purpose and the audience of the task.

There are different types of genres as discussed by Routman (2005) who discussed the characteristics of fairy tales, myths, fables, proverbs, memories, information reports, stories, journals, postcards, poetry, essays, fiction, letters, autobiographies and biographies. Some kinds of genres are more dominant within schools than others (stories, poetry, essays, and information reports). Each type has specific linguistic and structural features to help students recognize the context of that type.

So, teaching writing is a challenging task for teachers because that developmental process needs time to show improvement. Using all approaches will help complete what each one lacks, which supports students' improvement. If the linguistic knowledge and writing competence are well developed, then learners will create a written product.

Kellogg and Raulerson (2009) indicated that there are three processes of composing a text: self regulation of planning, text generation, and reviewing by being meta-cognitive. Kellogg and Raulerson pointed out that practice is the most important factor in acquiring the writing skills. It also helps to promote voice and style in an individual's writing. The ability to express linguistic and personal knowledge is the most important factor that affects writing skills.

Writing in First Language (L1)

Writing in a first language has a major effect on writing in a second language because of the differences between both languages. Cohen, Carson, and Cassuto (2000) found that the differences between L1 and L2 are less in pronunciation and grammar, but they are more in expression, translation and clauses. This means that students think in L1 when writing in L2, which causes overlapping between both languages in terms of expression or clauses. They indicated that planning in L1 helps students to write in L2 with more detail than planning directly in L2.

Hussein and Mohammad (2010) in a study implemented in Qatar on 60 students whose L1 was Arabic, revealed that, when writing, students think in their L1 and translate it into L2. So, those students encounter a problem in their writing in L2 especially when they compose words or sentences. In addition, they indicated that L2 proficiency determines the amount of transfer from L1 because students transfer from L1 whenever they lack the word or expression in L2. That means if the learner has high proficiency in L2, the transfer from L2 would be less and vice versa.

Al Abri (nd) pointed out that there are many differences between Arabic and English which affect the writing in L2. The first important difference is that Arabic is written from right to left while English goes from left to right. Some sounds and even the alphabet are different as well. While Arabic has 28 letters, English has 26 letters. English has capital and lowercase letters. This does not exist in the Arabic language, and this dramatic difference is confusing to the learner.

Jubhari (2009) indicated that English plays a role in the intellectual life of the academic community. This affects non-native speakers when writing in English because they have been influenced by their first language. So when asked to write academically, non-native speakers

face many obvious and hidden obstacles to produce acceptable results. Written academic discourse requires competence in one's language, culture, and ability to communicate. There are strategies to use standard academic features that lead to have academic discourse in writing while, minimizing cultural interference.

Adas and Bakir (2013) showed that the challenges in English language learners may face while learning to write. One important difference between Arabic and English is that a run on sentence which is more acceptable in Arabic language than English. Arabish is another aspect that is a challenging when the literal meaning of words related to Arabic are used differently in English. For example, the word peace and greeting are two words which have the same meaning in Arabic. Confusion arises in attempting to comprehend ideas in English which are otherwise clear in Arabic. Adas and Bakir also indicated that punctuation is another challenge used by students whose first language is Arabic because there are few limitations in using punctuation compared to English.

Learners' Writing Skills

Learning writing requires specific skills such as planning, organizing, evaluating and reflecting which help learners write in methodically. Having these skills depends on the knowledge learners have acquired through experience. Sometimes students are born with these skills and sometimes they are gained through effort and achievement at school.

Shackleford and Myers (2009) explained the benefits of integrating writing across the curriculum by designing a program to give services to enhance students' writing. The main purpose of the program was to enable students to be able to communicate a clear message which uses standard written in English. This plan leads to focus on different kinds of skills like

communication, research, and team work. The result was that students are able to compose documents with proper grammar, spelling, and punctuation and successfully conveying a clear message.

King (2002) indicated that student self reflection leads to skill development. The importance of the reflection stage is shown by the fact that when the students need to see new strategies for technical development, they are encouraged to revisit their reflection to show personal development. King discussed Mood's (1999) stages of reflection as follows. The first stage is when students understand the aims of the reflection activities. The second stage is basic observation. The third is additional and new information. The first level of reflection, revising, consists of finding and viewing the problem. The second stage, standing back, consists of taking new actions based on the experiments. The third stage, moving on, takes place when something has been learned or solved. A learning journal is used because it is difficult to incorporate reflection in the curriculum theme. It is a good tool to encourage reflection. Online journals reflections help students develop their skills in writing and expressing their ideas (King, 2002).

Critical thinking is another skill that helps students to solve their writing problems. Being a self expresser is a crucial stage of improving writing skills rather than achieving accuracy or having good writing product. To achieve and develop writing skills, they must be integrated with course content. Tchudi (1986) discussed writing skills are learned by doing and keeping it related to content by using models, critical suggestion with connecting to subject area. However, content must be the center of the writing process. Personalizing knowledge through writing is another concept was discussed by the researcher. It reflects verbal thought of the person with the subject. That could found on many aspects of many subjects; note taking, journals, free writing, letter, reading report outside the classroom and summarize it, interviews, and class newsletters.

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All those ways of writing tasks considered as workaday form of students work without teachers' correcting. Students are free to write their own thought using content that they choose and familiar with. Teachers then could function workaday by integrating content area of different subject project, and they could change the instruction according to the content area.

Tchudi (1986) indicated that teachers should be sure that their students are familiar with the materials before asking them to write about it. Instructors with different content areas such as history, science, and social studies could introduce the topic before asking students to write a task related to what they have learned. Thus, teachers are centered at the beginning; they have to establish a scope of learning principles of writing. They direct students to read a lot of materials related to the content of the subject area, and so then they end up writing about what they have learned. After integrating the subject area, students are quite qualified to write because they already have clear information about the topic.

Writing Difficulties

Writing is the most difficult skill that a person faces when learning a language. The person might face many problems which could delay learning. Many researchers studied this issue and tried to discover these difficulties in order to find a solution for these problems in general and writing in particular.

In their study, Ghabool, Edwina and Kashef (2012) showed that students in Malaysia have problems with writing in general, mostly in punctuation and language use. The purpose of the study consisted of identifying the problems in writing and getting information about ESL teachers' feedback on their students' work. They used essay examination and questionnaire to

collect their data. They noticed that students need more improvement in English proficiency and language use as well as teacher training programs to fix those problems.

Al-Khairy (2013) investigated writing problems of 75 Saudi undergraduate students using the 32 item Likert-scale questionnaire. Al-Khairy pointed out that students were very weak in sentences level and paragraph level. Students have serious problems mostly in using appropriate vocabulary in their academic writing. The study revealed that grammar is the second most important element that conveys a message in writing and that the students have a serious problem dealing with it. This shows how writing difficulties is an issue that all second learners face in all education levels.

Moreover, Al-Khasawneh (2010) found out that students have problems in using vocabulary, grammar, organizing ideas, and spelling. The study investigated the views of postgraduate students about their academic writing. He conducted his study on postgraduate students from the College of Business at University Utara Malaysia.

Adas and Bakir (2013) indicated that there are many problems in Palestinian writing classes. Mostly students do not have motivation, and they have limited vocabulary. That leads to difficulties in writing skills, and hinders their creativity. Moreover, they discussed that students who struggled with spelling, could start by using simple words that they are familiar with or they already know. Another challenge in writing is that students usually stick on one kind of tense and it is usually present tense and they ignore using other tenses which might change even the meaning, such as past, future, and continuous tense. In addition to that students have a problem with composing sentences and that makes their writing task hard to understand.

Al-Abri (nd) examined writing difficulties that students in secondary school might face. He used a survey for English language teachers in secondary schools and an interview with sample of learners as the instrument of this study. The result showed that many students are struggling with some areas in writing, starting mostly with spelling, verb tense and vocabulary. He also found that teachers do not have time to fix the errors or help students in their weaknesses. Learners agree that grammar and vocabulary are the most difficult areas in writing.

Westwood (2008) pointed out that students are struggling with writing in the early years of school because of either the teaching methods or some intrinsic factors to the students. Westwood indicated that the teaching methods are a serious factor and have a great influence on students' learning and overcoming difficulties. This is because some methods are more effective than others. In addition, the awareness of phonemic is an important issue to fix spelling difficulties in writing. If students lack phoneme skills, that can cause problems to recognize the spelling of words while writing.

The students who learn English as a second language face a lot of barriers that delay their learning in general. Sawir (2005) found that international students face many problems when learning English as a second language. The most common problem is that the learning style is different in both languages, and there is a culture shock when they start learning a new language. Also the language features are difficult such as grammar and that affects the communicative competence in general. Sawir explained that students might face such difficulties because they do not have enough exposure to the target language. Other sources of difficulty are previous knowledge and the methods used in teaching. Those two reasons must be taken into account especially for the teacher in order to help the students to gain more experience based on their previous knowledge and the way they got that knowledge.

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Giridharan and Robson (2011) identified the gaps in academic writing standards among ESL students in foundation studies programs. They also tried to identify the common grammatical, structural, and syntactic errors in writing tasks made by the students. They used a questionnaire for the staff and an essay for the students. They found that students struggled with the basic criteria of the writing task like: vocabulary, planning and organizing, and mechanics of writing. They indicated that using fundamental development in teaching, integrating, vocabulary, and instructional strategies helps learners to become more proficient in writing skills.

Reid (2009) indicated that assigning difficult writing and reflecting on learning experience helps students to improve their writing in general. This is because difficult and challenging tasks would push students to learn by responding to those difficulties critically. Reid revealed that if the teachers know their students and the level of the difficulties that students are able to face, that would help to advance students in their own learning. Thus while learners are facing these challenges, they would think critically and that helps them to generate more complex ideas and clear details. However, difficulties that student have to face should be in their current learning scope; otherwise they could feel frustrated and switch off.

Common Writing Errors Made By ESL Students

Errors in writing tasks are commonly found in different areas of writing. For example, errors are usually found in spelling, verb tenses, prepositions, and grammar in general. Many studies examined writing errors made by ESL learners, and most of these studies revealed that common writing errors are generally found in spelling and grammar.

Mungungu (2010) examined errors in a corpus of 360 essays written by 180 participants from grade 12 in a secondary school in Namibia. She revealed that the most common errors are

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found in four categories: spelling, articles, tenses, and prepositions. She used quantitative method to analyze her data. Usually, most of the writing errors are not fixed and not corrected. There are different techniques used to correct errors in writing, but it varies from one person to another.

In a study, Diab (2006) aimed to compare the preferences for error correction and paper-making techniques of EFL university instructors with the preferences of their students. He used a survey with a four part questionnaire on 14 female EFL instructors at the American University of Beirut in Lebanon. This study revealed various contradictions between students' and instructors' preferences toward error correction and paper-making techniques. Diab pointed out the differences in beliefs among instructors themselves. This is because maybe each teacher has his/her own method and philosophy in teaching writing, and that affects the students' learning of writing skills because if the teacher corrects each single mistake, that would affect students differently to those teachers who correct major errors and those who associated their correcting with comments.

Al Buainain (2006) used 40 exam scripts to figure out students' errors in writing and categorize the difficulties in English writing. Al Buainain found that students' writing errors are mostly in grammar (verb tense, sentence structure), inappropriate use of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and articles. The researcher concluded that those errors are due to the problems in teaching and learning writing skills or even English language acquisition. Al Buainain indicated that there are many approaches to teaching writing skills and teachers could apply different methods that are suitable to their students' level, needs and interests.

Writing Strategies

Writing strategies are the core that helps students write in a proper way. There are many writing strategies that can be used according to the students' level since the teacher and the learners should identify the best strategy that might improve their writing.

Reading is a skill that is used to absorb knowledge of ideas, style or critical thinking. Munson (1997) in a study using a remedial class of 20 students implemented 20 reading assignments and cultural contexts for critical thinking of writing class. Using different approaches to teach such as peer editing, multiple draft, teacher editing, free writing, journal writing, and computer. Focusing on one assignment which was first and second draft, the researcher found that there was an improvement in students' progress in writing an academic essay. This is because of reading assignments which give chances to enrich students' background knowledge, and provide students with cognitive skills for forming complex ideas.

John, Dickey, Hirabayashi and Stokes (2002) indicated that students who use planning strategies when writing are able to complete more than one draft. The teacher helps the students in their writing performance through practice and follow up assessments.

Fenton (2003) indicated that objectives and the audiences of the writing are important for the writing. Fenton also indicated that if writing is simple and easy to understand, it would help to improve writing skills. Sentences and paragraphs should be short and the paragraph should contain one coherent idea. Also, writing something which presents a number of items must be presented as a list using bullet points. It is better to use simple words and expressions. The text must be used in an active rather that passive style. Every new idea must be explained clearly by using examples or a diagram. Writing mechanics such as spelling, punctuation, and grammar are

necessary in writing. After that, one has to focus on the layout, sections, abstract, and conclusion. Fenton said that no matter what the quality of your writing is, just think of technical writing skills that help to improve your writing.

Graham and Perin (2007) explained eleven elements of effective writing instructions which help students who struggle with writing. Those elements are listed as follow. The first writing strategy consists of planning, revising, and editing. The second is the summarization which consists of showing the students models of summarized texts. The third is collaborative writing like group work or pair work. The fourth is about specifying the goals of the writing. The fifth one is word processing which is done by using computer to enhance students' writing. The sixth element is sentences combination which is achieved by constructing more complex sentences. The seventh element consists in prewriting, generating and organizing the ideas. The eighth element is about developing ideas. The ninth is the process of the writing approach which involves a workshop environment for writing opportunities. The tenth is the study of models of good writing to be analyzed. The final element, which is the result of the previous elements, consists of writing for content learning.

In addition, Smit (2010) indicated that students should go through writing processes to complete a written assignment. That will be accomplished by using different strategies: brainstorming ideas, planning, first draft, cooperative technique, and reflecting on their work. All these strategies improve students' writing skills.

Trites and S´eror (2003) pointed out that reading is an important strategy that improves writing skills, especially with spelling and vocabulary. However, students face culture clash

when reading in the target language. The study reveals that reflecting, editing, rewriting and cooperating are crucial strategies that enhance writing skills.

Mandal (2009) indicated that cooperative strategies facilitate exchanging different ideas of prior knowledge, solving problems, improving weak students' performance, and addressing different learning styles. He found that cooperative strategies provide opportunities to pair and self assessment. They also increase the confidence and the enthusiasm of students toward their writing.

All these elements are combined in a way to improve students' writing and ensure literacy development for the students. Usually, writing proficiency is developed over time, starting from a set of ideas, then moving to growing knowledge and using process of writing strategies. Finally, writing becomes a personal tool of transforming the ideas, knowledge and the experiences. Then a proficient writer moves from knowledge-telling to knowledge-transformation.

Learners' Views on Writing Tasks

Students have different backgrounds of knowledge and writing skills varying from one student to another according to the language proficiency that they have. Ismail (2011) investigated the students' views on an academic writing course at UAE University. The study was conducted on 64 female students from four sections in two different colleges. Questionnaires of 28 items divided into four categories were distributed to a sample of students, and an interview including 9 questions was administered to volunteer students. Ismail found out that students are aware of their needs to improve their writing proficiency in English because they believe that they have difficulties in writing due to their little experience in the past. The

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study showed that even though the students are satisfied with their current level in English and have a good impression of their abilities in writing, they consider the academic course as a challenging one.

In addition to the students' language proficiency, self confidence is another factor that affects the ability of students to perform better. If the learners trust their own abilities to perform in a proper way, they will do well without doubt. Shah et al (2011) examined self-efficacy of Malaysian Secondary school students who learn English language writing skills. They also investigated the relationship between the learners' self-efficacy and their writing performance and competence. They used a questionnaire and writing assessments to collect the data regarding self-efficacy of students. They used the results of the writing assessments as a tool to reflect students' performance. The study showed that there was a positive relationship between self-efficacy and writing performance. If the students have high self-efficacy, they also have higher performance in writing. They believe in their abilities so it is easy to express their thoughts.

Students and teachers value the feedback and consider it as a tool to help students improve their writing skills and their language proficiency in general. In a study, Maarof, Yamat, and Li (2011) investigated the views of ESL students in Malaysia toward the role of teachers' and peers' feedback in ESL writing. A number of 150 students from different secondary schools were given a questionnaire. The study revealed that, in their writing, students prefer the teachers' or the peers' feedback or a combination of the two. They believe that such feedback plays a major role in enhancing their writing skills in general because they help to draw a clear picture and structure their knowledge from the feedback that they gain from their teachers and their peers.

Many difficulties in writing tasks are common to ESL learners. They usually involve grammar, punctuation, syntax. In a study to identify these difficulties that students might face when they write an English academic task, Al Fadda (2012) used a questionnaire administered to 50 students from King Saud University, and he found that from the students' perception, academic writing is improving by using different approaches like computer-assisted writing instruction. In addition, students think that interaction with native English speakers plays an important role in improving their academic writing. The study revealed that students find most academic difficulties in grammar, pronouns, subject-verb agreement, and combining sentences.

Farooq, Ul-Hassan, and Wahid (2012), in a study of exploring writing difficulties in the English language faced by students as second learners, found that those learners faced a lot of difficulties related to lack of vocabulary, poor spelling, poor grammar, and first language interference. They used a survey to collect the data from 245 12th graders who study English as a second language and compulsory subject.

The most common difficulty students' face according to the researchers was vocabulary, while the least common difficulty was punctuation, especially the use of commas. Farooq, Ul-Hassan, and Wahid revealed that the difficulties in English writing are generally due to the differences between Eastern and Western cultures, and the interference of first language.

Trites and S´eror (2003) indicated that students think that they know their learning styles and the best technique to teach them based on their learning experiences. Students' reflections help them to be aware of their abilities to learn in a certain way. As a result, students have to choose the style of teaching that their teacher must follow to help them learn. Moreover, students need to

have a positive attitude toward them and culture awareness which helps them to have cultural competence and an ability to communicate through their writing.

In a study to identify the differences and similarities between teachers' views and students' views, Amrhein and Nassji (2010) investigated the students' and the teachers' preference about written feedback correction and why they prefer certain specific types of feedback to others. They used a questionnaire they distributed to 33 ESL students, and 31 ESL teachers. The study revealed that students prefer all their written mistakes to be corrected, while teachers prefer to correct at least the major common errors, and they correct these errors even though they occur several times. The study outlined that teachers believed that, to be more useful, the correction of errors must be associated with comments. In addition, Amrhein and Nassji found that students prefer to be corrected in grammar, punctuation, vocabulary, and spelling, whereas teachers like to correct the most important parts of the written text which are: the content, grammar, and organization. Students like large amounts of correction feedback, and the teachers think that comments would help students to learn autonomy.

Gotsch and Stathis (2012) carried out a survey in 2008 in New York to identify the current attitudes and perceptions of ESL/ ELD teachers toward grammar instructions for English learners. The study showed that teachers believed that the learners should be provided with direct instruction in the rules of grammar and writing conventions especially for beginning levels. Teachers believed that students need grammar instructions in all parts of language skills to improve their language proficiency.

Trites and S´eror (2003) revealed that teachers think writing skills requires grammar, and teachers find that focusing on grammar would help students to improve their writing skills. Trites

and S´eror indicated that one important perception of the teachers is that they are aware of their students' progress in linguistics features as well their cognitive abilities development. Thus, writing skills were taught and learned in a predictable way according to the cognitive process abilities within the students and their potential linguistics features.

Studies within the UAE Context

There are researchers who studied writing difficulties and provided suggestions to overcome them within the UAE context. As learners in the UAE are ESL learners, they struggle with writing skills. Researchers tried to find some solutions to help them improve the UAE learners' writing skills.

Al Naqbi (2011) examined the effectiveness of using mind mapping to improve writing skills in the UAE schools. Al Naqbi used different kinds of methods such as interview, reflective journal, observation, and mind map analysis, in order to collect the data. The study outlined that mind mapping helps students to plan and organize their writing tasks.

Dougherty (2011) examined using creative writing in the UAE and tried to see if this would encourage and motivate Emirati students to write in English outside the classroom. Dougherty used a case study of three classes in an academic year in order to write poetry. The survey revealed that Emirati students are satisfied with using creative writing and this encourages and motivates them to write well and improve their writing.

Agata (2011) studied the causes and the types of spelling mistakes made by second language learners in level three at the UAE University, United Arab Emirates. She used 66 project papers from four classes, and checked the first and the final drafts. The data were analyzed and she found that the spelling mistakes are categorized into four different parts: omission or substitution

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of vowels and consonants, pronunciation, transposition, and insertion. Agata highlighted that the spelling mistakes that occurred the most were found in substitution, omission, and insertion categories.

Dowling (2011) examined the design of the second language writing activities applied in WebQuest and electronic journals in a task-based, product/process hybrid approach to second language writing. This design was applied to the UAE Foundation Program students who had limited language proficiency. The aim of using WebQuest was to show the reality of learning and improving students' writing skills. In addition, using electronic journals improved their writing process and they were able to produce good written texts. This study represents new strategies of integrating technology and using computers to enhance writing.

Aouina (2006) indicated that students' views had changed when she examined the views of students in the UAE schools by associating the activities using process based approaches in classroom writing. Using the three different instruments, survey, interview and journal notes, in the investigation of the change of students' views toward writing, resulted in a clear and positive change in students' views toward writing. Students reflect on their writing and learn from their mistakes. This gives them confidence in their writing ability.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Introduction

This section covers the method of this study, including the participants, the instruments, and the procedures. This study aims to investigate students' views regarding writing difficulties. It also aims to answer the following questions:

1. What kind of difficulties/barriers do students face when writing in English?
2. What strategies do students use when writing in English?
3. How do students view their abilities in writing in English?

Survey questionnaires were distributed to a sample of students in a large girl's high school, "Umm Al Emirate Secondary School," in Al Ain.

Population and Participants

The population of this study included all students in grade 10, 11, and 12 in one of the largest girls' high schools, "Umm Al Emirate Secondary School," in Al Ain. The researcher used this school for several reasons. The first reason is that the researcher is working there and the researcher is familiar with the school context. Secondly, the researcher had easy access to all classes in this school. Thirdly, the principal and the staff are very cooperative and they encouraged that this study be conducted. Finally, this school is considered to be one of the largest schools in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

The researcher can contact the participants daily due to researcher's position in this school. The population consists of 504 students. However, 386 students were chosen to participate in this study. From the 386 submitted surveys, 26 were disqualified and removed from the survey

due to non completion of all the questions of the survey. This left the group with 360 participants for the survey. The study ensured an equal percentage of participation from each grade level. Polls of 120 questionnaires were collected from each grade. For example (see table 1 below).

All participants in the study were aged between 15-19 years old. The student population was composed of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds; for instance some of students' parents and families are educated and value studying, whereas some of them are not motivated to study a second language. However, most the participants are from the UAE and share the same background. They are taught through different teaching styles and different teachers who possess different experiences. Students in cycle 3 in ADEC and UAE schools in general are in three levels, grade 10, 11, and 12. Grade 11 and 12 include two sections, Science and Literary. Students in both sections study the same curriculum of English language, so there is no difference that might affect students' abilities in terms of the section types. The participants are studying English as a second language. They have been studying English for years. They are all following the same system of learning English as they follow the same standards set by ADEC.

Table 1

The number of convenient sample of participants in the study.

Grade Level	Students Number (N)	Percentage (%)
Grade 10	120	33.33%
Grade 11	120	33.33%
Grade 12	120	33.33%
Total	360	99.99%

Instrumentation

A questionnaire was developed to collect data concerning writing difficulties, strategies and students' views toward their abilities of writing skills. It was designed in accordance with the questions of this study.

The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part was to answer the study question related to writing difficulties: *What kind of difficulties barriers do students face when writing in English?* This section included 19 items to investigate different writing difficulties: spelling, sentence structure, punctuation, vocabulary, ideas, transition words, text type, and grammar.

The second part included proper writing strategies that students use when writing in English: *What strategies do students use when writing in English?* It contained 12 items all related to different strategies students usually use when writing in English, for instance: working in groups, reading, reading models, reading others' work, planning, brainstorming, and discussing.

The third and final part was to evaluate the students' views regarding their ability to write in English: *How do students view their abilities in writing in English?* This part included 14 items including three sections: the enjoyment of writing, the satisfaction of writing, and students' feelings in general about writing.

Participants were given between 15 and 20 minutes to answer this questionnaire. The questionnaire was made up of a 5 point likert-scale descending from "5" (strongly agree) to "1" (strongly disagree).

Validity and Reliability of the instrument

The questionnaire was designed to examine students' views of writing difficulties and their effects on the students' writing abilities. Professionals in the field of education were given the

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survey to review, evaluate, edit, and then determine the validity of the survey. The questionnaire was given to four licensed teachers who are native English speakers and advisors. It was also given to five university professors in the College of Education to review and evaluate. The thesis advisor also helped in evaluating and reviewing the questionnaire. They reviewed the survey, checking for structure and duplication; they ensured that items were not only organized in appropriate sections of the survey, but that the various items were not repeating similar content. The questionnaire was reviewed and modified in light of the comments which were provided. While the initial survey included 57 items, the modified and final draft included only 45 items.

Reliability was computed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the three sections, writing difficulty, writing strategies, and for the students' views regarding writing in English. Table 2 shows the reliability score for each section just below 1.0 which is considered acceptable.

Table 2

Reliability Statistics of the Questionnaire Items

Reliability Measure	Items Number	Cronbach's Alpha
Writing Difficulties	19	.933
Writing Strategies	12	.913
Students' views of writing	14	.750
Overall	45	.917

Data Collection

The questionnaire was distributed after getting permission from the principal of the school who wanted all the questionnaires to be distributed at the same time. However, due to the need to clarify the questionnaire to the students, it was distributed over two weeks; each grade level received the survey at different times to ensure having accurate responses.

During the first week, 266 copies were completed while the remaining 120 were distributed in the second week. Through the first week, two levels, grade 12 and 11, were answered the questionnaire to ensure that students at the same level do the survey at the same time, while grade 10 answer the questionnaire throughout next week. Usually, students spent around 15- 20 minutes completing the questionnaire with a little clarification for each class throughout the two weeks. The confidentiality of the survey responses was made clear to the participants and they were told that their responses would be used for academic purposes only.

Later the data were analyzed and tabled to measure the students' views toward the difficulties and strategies of writing skills. Finally, the findings were described and used to answer the questions of the study.

Data Analysis

After the data were collected, it was then analyzed by using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (BIM SPSS) version 20.0 to measure students' views toward writing difficulties and writing strategies. Means and standard deviations were calculated to analyze students' views regarding their own difficulties that are faced when writing in English, and the strategies they use when writing in English.

Limitations of the study

This study focused on high school students, but the sample was selected only from one high school in Al- Ain (Umm Al Emirate Secondary School) because the students were easy to reach and they could easily answer the questionnaires. In addition to this the study was used only as a survey to collect the data, while interview is another instrument that could be used easily because the researcher is working in that school. Thus, the findings are that there is a lack of resourceful instruments which might affect the accuracy of the results. Although this study was conducted in one school and uses only one type of instrument still its findings can be generalized with some cautions such as the cycle, first language, L2 proficiency. Moreover, since this study focused on examining females' views only, it can't be generalized in boys' schools at the same cycle with the same first language.

Results

Introduction

This study was conducted to investigate students' views regarding their difficulties when writing in English. A questionnaire was used to achieve the purpose of the study. The study sought to answer the following questions;

1. What kind of difficulties/barriers do students face when writing in English?
2. What strategies do students use when writing in English?
3. How do students view their abilities in writing in English?

This chapter presents the results obtained from the data. The results are divided into three parts, the first part is about writing difficulties, the second one is about writing strategies and the last part is about students' views regarding their abilities to write in English. The results were analyzed using the means and standard deviations which ranked from the highest to the lowest based on the means.

Writing Difficulties

In this part, there were 19 items and most of them focused on the difficulties that students face when writing in English. These problems were found in spelling, grammar, vocabulary, transition words, ideas, sentence structure and punctuation. Table 3 indicates the means and standard deviations of these difficulties. As shown in table 3 the mean mostly is closed throughout the items descending from 3.24 to 2.66 which reflects the similarities of the difficulties that students face in writing.

Table 3 shows writing difficulties in spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, grammar, ideas, text type, and vocabulary (means ranging from 3.24 to 2.66). One interesting result was that most students found using punctuation as the most difficult challenge when writing in English (M=3.24, SD=1.26). The majority of students indicated that they have difficulties in using specific text types (M= 3.19, SD= 1.43) and thinking of what to write (M= 3.17, SD= 1.59). Almost the same mean indicated that students viewed sentence structure as a challenging task (M= 3.16, SD=1.33) and using correct words for suitable context too (M= 3.15, SD= 1.32).

Moreover, many students pointed out that they have many difficulties in combining sentences (M= 3.14, SD= 1.25), understanding the prompts (M= 3.12, SD=1.29), and organizing their ideas (M= 3.11, SD= 1.42). In addition, most students struggled to write coherent sentences (M= 3.08, SD= 1.19) and to use transition words (M=3.05, SD= 1.45). Also, students indicated that finding the right word was a challenging task (M= 3.06, SD= 1.33).

However, students gave less attention to the difficulties of spelling (M= 2.66, SD= 1.17) and they found that unfamiliar topics were not negative factors that could stop them writing. They have fewer difficulties in this area (M= 2.76, SD= 1.32). Most of the students thought that using proper grammar in their writing was not a big deal, using grammar is the least difficult task (M= 2.87, SD= 1.44).

In general, table 3 illustrates that students have difficulties generally in punctuation, text type, brainstorming, sentence structure, vocabulary, transition words, organizing ideas, combining and coherent sentences. For most students, spelling, unfamiliar topics, grammar, and clarifying ideas were the least difficult skills in writing in English.

Table 3

Writing Difficulties

Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
1. Spelling words.	360	2.66	1.17	19
2. Subject- verb agreement.	360	3.00	1.26	14
3. Combining sentences.	360	3.14	1.25	6
4. Using punctuations.	360	3.24	1.26	1
5. Identifying parts of speech.	360	3.01	1.27	13
6. Writing coherent sentences.	359	3.08	1.19	9
7. Understanding prompts (questions).	359	3.12	1.29	7
8. Using the right tenses.	360	3.04	1.28	12
9. Finding the right words.	359	3.06	1.33	10
10. Sentence structure.	360	3.16	1.33	4
11. Using the right word in correct contexts.	359	3.15	1.32	5
12. Clarifying my ideas.	358	2.90	1.35	16
13. Unfamiliar topics.	360	2.76	1.32	18
14. Translating my ideas from Arabic to English.	359	2.95	1.49	15
15. Organizing my ideas.	360	3.11	1.42	8
16. Using transition words in my writing (e.g., however, therefore, etc.).	359	3.05	1.45	11
17. Using specific text types.	360	3.19	1.43	2
18. Using proper grammar in my writing.	360	2.87	1.44	17
19. Thinking about what to write.	360	3.17	1.59	3

Note: SD- Standard Deviation. N- number of participants

Writing Strategies

Students use different strategies when writing in English, and these strategies help to improve their writing. The following writing strategies are shown in table 4: brainstorming, planning, reading, using academic models, working in groups, learning or practicing different writing styles, and discussing. Table 4 shows different opinions regarding the best strategies to improve students' writing as shown in table 4, the mean of the items responses is closed and it ranged between 2.1 to 2.4 which reflect that students have almost the same orientation of the useful strategies.

Most of the students believe that learning to properly use academic style (such as writing a research paper, information report, or a narrative or persuasive essay, for example) helps improve their writing skills ($M= 2.46$, $SD= 1.92$). Many of them think that working with each other helps them solve their writing problems, even more than working with the teacher ($M= 2.42$, $SD=1.83$). Students believe that rewriting their task several times usually improves their writing ($M= 2.39$, $SD= 1.69$). They also prefer to read each other's work because it helps them to learn from each other students' mistakes and improve their own writing skills ($M= 2.32$, $SD= 1.56$).

In addition, students are in favor of the strategy of brainstorming ideas in order to help find their own focus in writing ($M= 2.26$, $SD= 170$). Some students like to use the models strategy in order to write better ($M= 2.25$, $SD= 1.63$). Rereading what they have already written is another strategy that some students think is beneficial ($M=2.24$, $SD= 1.50$). Table 4 also indicates that some students find working in groups to be a strategy that enables them to generate more ideas ($M= 2.21$, $SD= 1.61$).

On the other hand, fewer students prefer to use the planning strategy to organize their ideas (M= 2.13, SD= 1.60). Fewer students also prefer to use the reading strategy for exploring different style of writing (M= 2.16, SD= 1.71) or reading to help find new ideas (M= 2.16, SD= 1.83). A number of students believe that discussing a topic with others before writing helps them to write better (M= 2.17, SD= 1.84).

Overall, Table 4 reveals that students have different views about using writing strategies, such as brainstorming, reading, working in groups, planning, discussing, writing styles and models. According to Table 4 most of the students like to work in group, look at different models, brainstorm or practice using particular academic style. Fewer of them, however, like to use strategies such as planning, reading, and discussing before writing.

Table 4

Writing Strategies

Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
20. Working in groups enables me to generate more ideas.	360	2.21	1.61	8
21. Rereading what I have written helps me produce a good piece of writing.	360	2.24	1.50	7
22. Reading other students' work helps me improve my writing.	360	2.32	1.56	4
23. Looking at models helps me write better.	359	2.25	1.63	6
24. Planning helps me organize my ideas.	360	2.13	1.60	12
25. Writing my task several times helps me improve my writing skills.	360	2.39	1.69	3

26. Brainstorming ideas helps me find a focus for my writing problems.	360	2.26	1.70	5
27. Reading helps me explore different writing styles.	358	2.16	1.71	10
28. Working with others helps me solve my writing problems more easily.	360	2.42	1.83	2
29. Reading helps me find more ideas for my writing.	358	2.16	1.83	11
30. Discussing the topic helps me write better.	360	2.17	1.84	9
31. Using an academic style helps me improve my writing skills.	360	2.46	1.92	1

Note: SD- Standard Deviation. N- number of participants

Students' Views toward Their Writing Abilities

Table 5 shows students' views regarding writing in English which includes their feelings and rate of satisfaction about their writing skills. It shows students' views about their level of confidence, embarrassment, enjoyment, feedback, exchanging of ideas, reading, and writing difficulties. There are obviously many variations in students' responses in this section, and the standard deviation is large. This reflects the different views that were given by the students about their abilities in writing.

One important result in the data in table 5 is that most of the students feel bored when writing in English (M= 3.42, SD= 2.48). A number of students find writing in English, in general, to be very difficult (M= 3.32, SD= 2.45). Many students indicated that they get embarrassed when someone reads their writing (M= 3.13, SD=2.64). A number of students prefer to work alone during class time, and feel they can write even better by themselves (M= 2.81, SD= 2.39). Some students enjoy writing during class time, rather than anywhere else (M= 2.79, SD= 2.09). Other

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students feel confident about their writing skills (M= 2.69, SD= 2.50), and in general, enjoy writing in English (M= 2.55, SD= 2.03).

Moreover, some students enjoy writing notes and letters instead of writing for an academic purpose (M= 2.53, SD= 2.00). Others prefer to get feedback from their friends, rather than from their teachers in order to write better (M= 2.28, SD= 2.15).

Nevertheless, a number of students still like to get feedback from their teachers (M= 1.99, SD= 2.17). A few of them think that reading about the topic helps them write better (M= 2.12, SD= 2.31). A few students enjoy exchanging or sharing ideas with others (M=2.18, SD= 2.05), (M= 2.19, SD= 2.12). In addition, a few students prefer looking at a model before writing (M= 2.25, SD= 2.21).

To sum up, table 5 shows students' views toward writing in English and mostly their views are varied. Most of the students viewed writing as a difficult and boring task, and thought it might be embarrassing if others read their work. Many, however, were confident of their writing skills, and enjoy writing both in class and out of school. Some of the students enjoy writing notes and letters instead of doing school work or writing formal essays, and they prefer to get comments from their classmates instead of their teacher. However, a few students prefer to get feedback from their teacher, read about the topic, or share ideas with others as well as looking at academic models.

Table 5

Students' Views

Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
32. I enjoy writing in English.	360	2.55	2.03	7
33. I enjoy writing notes and letters to people.	360	2.53	2.00	8
34. I enjoy writing during class time.	360	2.79	2.09	5
35. I enjoy exchanging ideas with others.	359	2.18	2.05	12
36. I enjoy sharing my ideas with my friends before writing them.	360	2.19	2.12	11
37. I write better when I get feedback from other students.	360	2.28	2.15	9
38. I write better when I get feedback from the teacher.	360	1.99	2.17	14
39. I write better after looking at a model.	359	2.25	2.21	10
40. I write better when I work alone during class.	359	2.81	2.39	4
41. I write better when I read about a topic.	360	2.12	2.31	13
42. Writing in English is very difficult for me.	360	3.32	2.45	2
43. I feel bored when writing in English.	360	3.42	2.48	1
44. I feel confident about my writing skills.	360	2.69	2.50	6
45. I feel embarrassed when someone reads my writing.	360	3.13	2.64	3

Note: SD- Standard Deviation. N- number of participants

Chapter Five

Discussion

Discussion of Research Findings

This study aimed to investigate students' views about writing difficulties and strategies. To achieve this purpose, a questionnaire was designed, administered, and then the data were collected and analyzed in Chapter 4. This chapter discusses and explains the results and the findings from the data that were collected and presented in Chapter 4. Some recommendations for English teachers, curriculum planners and suggested future studies are also provided.

Writing Difficulties

One of the research questions was *what kind of difficulties/barriers do students face when writing in English?* According to the data that were collected, most of the difficulties faced by the students when writing in English are found in punctuation, vocabulary, sentence structure, combining sentences, transition words, and other grammatical errors. These difficulties may arise because of the clash between using different approaches in the teaching process and the assessment. A process- based approach used in teaching, and a product- based approach used for evaluation, may be in conflict with each other. For instance, students are often evaluated on writing "mechanics" in their formal assessments, which is a product-based approach. Even though they may not have been taught directly about punctuation and grammar, students may still be required to use them correctly in their writing, and are often being graded on their usage. This is why students often complain about the difficulties of these elements when doing a writing assignment. Students who are learning to communicate in a second language tend to focus on understanding words and trying to communicate ideas, and there is often less concern

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about the importance of mechanics and usage. The mechanics of writing is frequently taught indirectly, almost by osmosis, without asking students to concern themselves with punctuation, spelling and grammar usage in a structured and formal way.

Tangpermpoon (2008) indicated that product-based approaches depend on several activities that support their writing in terms of grammar and syntax. Some examples are: paragraphs, sentence- combining and rhetorical patterns exercises. This approach focuses on structures without giving any consideration to the importance of the writer's experiences. Badger and White (2000) identified the product-based approach as the knowledge of language. So if the students lack the basic knowledge of language, their writing skills would be affected, and make their writing tasks more difficult. For this reason students think vocabulary and grammar are difficult when writing in English because there is less attention to building a language-base curriculum in the ADEC's schools. Sarsar (2008) indicated that students in UAE Model Schools reveal poor writing skills and students said these difficulties were because of some poor teaching practices and ineffective pedagogies.

Ghabool, Edwina and Kashef (2012) showed in their study that students have problems with writing, in general, and mostly with punctuation and language usage. They revealed that students need more improvement in English proficiency, grammar and language usage, in general. So, in order to facilitate their writing skills, it is important to teach language mechanics from the beginning, because that could positively affect the students' work.

Furthermore, the differences between the Arabic and English increase the difficulties. Students face some of these difficulties because of the differences between both languages. For example, sentence in Arabic can start with either the subject or the verb, but in English, the

sentence usually starts with the subject, unless it is an imperative sentence. (Al Abri, nd).
Students frequently study second languages without being directed to the differences between
both languages from the beginning. This could help the learners to understand these differences,
and put them in their considerations when using the language. Jubhari (2009) indicated that non-
native speakers often include cultural aspects from their first language when writing in English.
The learners should be taught from the beginning that there are some differences between both
languages in term of linguistics, or even cultural, features.

Adas and Bakir (2013) indicated that punctuation is another challenge students face , whose
first language is Arabic. This is because there are few limitations in using punctuation in Arabic,
as compared to English. Punctuation often helps determine the meaning and the nuanced
understanding of a sentence, however, in English.

It is clear from these findings that there is less focus on new ADEC curriculum content and
it is more of a process- based approach. The ADEC focus is more on meaning, critical thinking,
and expressing ideas clearly, which is a cognitive approach. That is one reason why students
struggle with these writing difficulties, because the focus has shifted from content to meaning.
However, students are, strangely enough, still evaluated on both content and meaning, which sets
them up for failure. This is not their first language, and it requires more time and a lot of effort
for a new language to be acquired. Therefore, it is necessary to teach these rules and techniques
in punctuation, sentence structure, and grammar, spelling, combining sentences and using
transition words correctly, together with meaning, from the very beginning, in order to help
students reach communicative competence. It is also crucial to use the same approaches in
teaching and evaluating, in order to have consistency between the content (curriculum), process
(teaching methods) and product (assessment).

This study found that a number of students have difficulties with spelling and grammar. This finding is due to the new system in the Abu Dhabi schools, which focuses on a process approach, rather than on a product approach. The new system focuses on a process approach and constructivism theories, with less emphasis on rote memorization, and more emphasis on meaning. It pushes students to be able to communicate better in their second language. Moreover, there is crucial attention to the importance of cooperative work, and student- centered learning in ADEC schools. Thus, less attention is given to the importance of writing mechanics, such as grammar, punctuation and spelling, especially in Cycle Three. Mungungu (2010) revealed that the most common errors made by Namibian learners are in four categories: spelling, articles, tenses, and prepositions usage. She outlined that, when writing, errors were made because of carelessness rather than lack of knowledge. However, in the case of these students in the UAE, this study is different because the students made these errors due to their knowledge of the English language, and not so much because of carelessness. Al Jayousi (2011) investigated the spelling problems among learners of English in the UAE, public schools, and the causes of these problems. Using compositions written by over 537 male students from four levels grade 9 to 12. Analyzing the errors of spelling showed that students have a lot of spelling mistakes. By grade 12, students show insignificant progress. That due to following the same instruction which results the same spelling problems and fewer activities related spelling in textbooks, as the case in ADEC schools especially with spelling activities which are rarely used.

Students are taught to be able to communicate in a second language. That is why students think spelling or grammar, in general, does not affect their communication because they focus on the meaning rather than the content. Moreover, according to the new system in Abu Dhabi schools, grammar is taught by integrating some grammar points in context. That is why most

students do not care that much about having perfect grammar, or even about correcting their spelling. They focus on their ability to communicate in a second language and convey meaning. Hourani (2008) in a study to explore the common types of grammatical errors that Emirati secondary male students have in their English writing essay, found that most of the errors were on verb tense, and word order. Hourani used questionnaires for 105 students and interviewed 20 teachers. The interference and transfer between both first and second languages is the major reason of grammar errors in written essay.

Teachers believe that learners should be provided with direct instruction about the rules of grammar and other writing conventions. They believe that students need grammar instruction in order to improve their language proficiency (Gotsch & Stathis, 2012). Most teachers at Umm Al Emirate School, due to the low results on CEPA and grade 12 MOE (ministry of education) exams, have lost faith in the indirect instruction of grammar rules. They argue that students need to be taught grammar, and other writing conventions, directly, because they lack basic language skills.

Consequently, students need to learn the mechanics of a second language, such as grammar, punctuation and correct spelling in order to be able to write a proper academic essay or report. Both teacher and students must understand the importance of learning basic language skills, such as grammar, from the very beginning. Non native speakers of another language should be aware of the structural differences between their own language and the new language they desire to learn. If students are to acquire communicative competence, they must also become aware of other things, such as cultural and linguistic elements in a language, as well.

Writing Strategies Preferred by Students

This study revealed some possible strategies, from the students' point of view, which could be used as tools to help improve their writing skills. The most common strategy that they indicated helps their writing is being provided with examples of different academic writing styles. Students appreciate learning about, and practicing different academic styles (such as writing a research paper, a narrative or a compare and contrast essay). Working in groups is another strategy, which students prefer, in order to help them solve their writing problems. Students use group work to exchange ideas, and help each other to overcome their difficulties, and improve their writing. This technique makes sense from a cultural standpoint, as most Emiratis come from a tribal background, where helping other members of one's extended family and community is valued. It is also one of the 21st century skills that ADEC views as cooperation. Students in Abu Dhabi schools often prefer to work in groups because they feel a sense of safety and security when working as a team. This technique also provides a form of community and society, as students are able to motivate and support each other through group interactions. (Mu, Congjun, 2005)

Social constructivists believe that exchanging ideas with others helps students construct them, based on Chapter Two. They exchange ideas through collaborating and constructing their text together (Mu, Congjun, 2005). Students can construct new knowledge through working in groups within a communicative atmosphere, with the help of their teacher. Students feel secure to ask their peers with confidence because each one has specific knowledge, which the others need. Mandal (2009) also indicated the importance of group work as cooperative strategies that facilitate exchanging different ideas about prior knowledge, solving problems, improving weak students' performance, and addressing different learning styles. Fitze (2009) compared the effects

of planning writing work in different setting: group setting (face to face), Computer- chat group, and individual setting. The study was conducted on female students in the UAE, and the results showed that group setting led to the greatest amount of cooperation with major advantages on completing that draft of writing. Working in group is the most preferred technique that improves the effectiveness of writing.

The study explored strategies that improve students' writing: brainstorming, planning, and discussing. Students prefer to use these writing strategies in order to help them organize their thoughts and be able to write in stages. According to the system, students usually use these strategies to help them think and plan their own writing tasks, which is a form of cognitive theory. Kellogg and Raulerson (2009) indicated that there are three processes for composing a text: self regulation through planning, text generation, and reviewing by using meta-cognitive approach. Al Naqbi (2011) outlined that mind mapping helps students in the UAE schools to plan and organize their writing tasks.

Furthermore, discussion is the best way to introduce students to the topic before asking them to write. They have to be actively engaged in acquiring the knowledge that might help them to write. The curriculum includes a specific topic for each level that would help students to develop their potential knowledge. Wedel, et al. (2009), reinforced the idea that learning writing skills must be associated with in a context, in order to help the learners to expand their knowledge about the topic. That would then integrate writing skills into the context of the curriculum.

This study found that reading is another strategy that improves writing skills. However, students prefer to read each other's work, rather than academic essays, such as information reports or research papers. This study also shows that students in Cycle Three use their reading

skills when doing research for writing their own papers. However, they prefer to read their peers' work more than other texts because it is easier to understand and more likely to be closer to their own reading levels. They understand that reading gives them a clear idea about what to write. So, reading also helps them to generate ideas about different topics and expand their knowledge about a particular topic. Trites and S´eror (2003) showed that reading is an important strategy for improving one's writing skills, especially as a way to improve one's spelling and vocabulary, in spite of the clash of cultural exchanging.

Modeling is another writing strategy that is discussed in this study. However, a model could be used to copy some sentences for a specific task, which is more of a product approach to learning (Badger, 2000). Students might use a model to follow the same format too closely, to copy some key sentences, or to make changes to their own work. Nevertheless, models could be used to analyze student writing in order to better understand its components and apply them to different tasks and topics, for more of a process approach to learning. These strategies help to clarify the concepts involved and the requirements of a task. Students usually feel relaxed and unthreatened when looking at a model writing sample, in order to either copy some of the key phrases or to more closely examine its components. Students like to know exactly what is expected of them for a particular writing assignment, and appreciate being able to compare their own work to the model given. This allows them to be able to make sure that their work has been done in the right way, and they are able to complete the assignment correctly. Students like to be shown models of different writing styles and genres, especially when being introduced to a new style for the first time.

Students' Views toward Writing Abilities

This study revealed students' views regarding their writing skills in English. Most of the students viewed writing as a very difficult task to accomplish in English. That is primarily due to the lack of basic language knowledge and a lack of exposure to the target language. Although there are many ADEC teachers who are native speakers of English currently teaching in Cycle Three schools, there are still not enough of them to create a total immersion environment, or to make a big impact on learning. Students are still functioning primarily within the confines of their first language and their own culture, which makes it that much more difficult to write in English. Dowling (2011) indicated that students in the UAE were struggling with writing skills because of their limited knowledge of second language and inability to come up with their own original ideas, which results in their view of English writing as a very difficult task.

Farooq, Ul-Hassan, and Wahid (2012) found that learners in South Asia faced a lot of difficulties related to their lack of vocabulary, poor spelling, poor grammar, and first language interference. They determined that their students' difficulties in English writing were generally due to the differences between Eastern and Western cultures, and the interference of first language habits and customs. Consequently, according to their students' views, English writing is difficult due to the lack of basic language skills and the differences between both languages and cultures.

Al Fadda (2012) indicated that students face most of their difficulties with learning English in grammatical areas such as: pronouns, subject-verb agreement, and combining sentences. These are the most important features involved in the composition of a text. This is usually due to the fact that students use oral language more than the written one, and this leads them to not

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focus on these features. Consequently, using electronic techniques to communicate with others could help them improve their writing, and this is ignored in most schools. That could push students to communicate using written language through using technology. Al Fadda emphasized using computer assistance and interactions with native English speakers to improve academic writing.

Moreover, this study showed that students get bored when writing in English. This is most likely because they lack basic writing skills. They must have confidence in their abilities. As Shah et al. (2011) indicated, learners' self-efficacy affects their writing performance and competence. If the students have high self-efficacy, they will have higher performance in writing. Students need to learn basic language first, before asking them to write an essay. Eroglu (2009) discussed the constructivism theory and the importance of not ignoring the students' previous experiences. Teachers should build on what students have learned so far, and they should teach those foundational language skills needed for writing. Then they can move on to help students write a complete sentence, paragraph and finally, an entire essay.

Many students get embarrassed when their work is read by others. One reason is their lack of confidence about their abilities, even though some of them do have confidence in their writing skills. Fear of other's ridicule is another reason for getting embarrassed when someone else reads or hears what they have written. Generally, the majority of students need to have higher self esteem with regard to their writing abilities.

This study found that students prefer writing informal notes or emails to their family and friends, rather than writing a formal and academic essay. This is due to the fact that students connect their daily life to their writing. They prefer to write about events that took place in their

lives. An academic essay, on the other hand, requires a more professional and formal language. Alter and Adkin (2001) indicated that being a self- expresser helps to improve one's writing skills better than being accurate or having a good writing product. Consequently, writing notes and emails does actually prepare students to write an essay later. Dougherty (2011) pointed out that Emirati students are happy to use creative writing outside the classroom, and this encourages and motivates them to write well and improve their academic writing inside the classroom.

Most of the students, as shown in this study, prefer to get feedback from their peers, rather than their teachers (M= 2.28, SD=2.15). Students often learn better from their peers because their peers know them and know their weaknesses so well, so it is easy for them to help them. Students associate teacher feedback with grades or marks, and that might make them prefer to get feedback from their fellow students. Teachers and students generally view feedback as a tool that helps to improve students' writing skills and their language proficiency. Thus, it is important to encourage students to get feedback from either their classmates or their teacher within a context of providing constructive feedback, and not a context of harsh judgment. This is what Maarof, Yamat, and Li (2011) discussed the perceptions of ESL students toward the role of the teacher and peer feedback in ESL writing. They revealed that, in their writing, students preferred teachers' feedback or peers' feedback, or combination of the both. They believe that such feedback plays a major role in enhancing their writing skills in general. Abou Eissa (2010) pointed out that most students in the UAE prefer to have feedback from their teachers, and they even value what they receive. The study was conducted in government secondary schools in the UAE, to investigate students' views about their teachers' feedback on their written assignments. Abou Eissa used two forms of questionnaires, which were answered by 240 students, along with follow-up interviews with volunteer teachers.

Finally, in this study, a small number of students said they enjoyed exchanging or sharing ideas with others, even though they know that it is one of the best strategy to improve their writing. One reason might be that the students are put in the same ability group. That could be boring sometimes because students mostly have the same level and might have less creativity. Another reason that few students might enjoy exchanging ideas with others is because they might not want to work with their friends, or in the spirit of competition, share their brilliant ideas with their opponents.

Conclusion

The aim of this study is to investigate students' views regarding their English writing skills, and to determine the difficulties they face, as well as the writing strategies they employ, in order to facilitate their writing. A 45 likret-scale items questionnaire was designed and distributed to 360 female high school students at "Umm Al Emirate Secondary School" in Al Ain, UAE. The data were collected and the findings were analyzed. Suggestions based on these findings are provided in order to overcome problems associated with writing.

The Findings of this study show that most of the students struggle with punctuation, vocabulary, sentences structure, combining sentences and using transition words. This is due to the differences between the Arabic and English languages, and the new ADEC teaching system, which focuses on a process-based approach. Teachers in the Abu Dhabi public school system focus more on meaning than on content and they pay less attention to the mechanics of writing. Basic language skills are taught indirectly through integrating language features within contexts, without paying much attention to the importance writing mechanics can play in trying to convey meaning.

Students used strategies to improve and enhance their writing, and according to the results of this study, most of the students prefer to work cooperatively in groups. They value exchanging ideas with their classmates, and they prefer to have a sense of community and social interaction while they are learning. Moreover, they like brainstorming and planning in groups, or as a whole class, before starting to write. However, students surveyed did not like to discuss the topic, read for new ideas, or even to try and discover different writing styles that might help them when writing.

The results of this study show the students' views about their writing skills in general, and reveal that most of them view writing in English as a very difficult task to accomplish. Many students feel embarrassed if their work is read by others. Even though students know that academic writing is important, they prefer to write notes and emails instead. They view feedback as an important factor for improve their writing levels, but most of them prefer to have feedback from their friends rather than from their teachers. This is due to their shyness in front of their teachers, and because they feel their friends understand them better than the teachers. On the other hand, while students may believe that group work helps them improve their writing skills, only very few of them enjoy writing as a group.

The findings of this study give a clear picture of the students' views regarding writing difficulties and strategies used when writing in English. This study provides teachers with a clear understanding of their students' weaknesses in writing in English and helps them to figure out their students' needs. This could help teachers in the UAE find ways to help their students improve their writing skills and overcome their writing difficulties.

In addition, policy makers, curriculum designer, English supervisors, and heads of faculties might find these results beneficial when designing new curricula or trying to determine suitable teaching methods, and they could possibly set new standards to help minimize writing barriers at earlier ages. Although this study was conducted in only one school and focuses only on female students' views, the findings can still be beneficial to other gender and cycles of ESL learners in the UAE.

Recommendations for English Teachers

The findings of this study trigger many suggested recommendations for both teachers and researchers in this field. One important recommendation is that teachers should focus on punctuation, vocabulary and sentence structure at the early stages of teaching because if the students have enough vocabulary and knowledge regarding how to compose a sentence, they will be able to write more easily. In addition, teachers have to compare both languages, English and Arabic, and point out the differences between them. Learners of a second language have to know the basic differences between both languages at early stages of their learning in order to avoid language interference.

Another recommendation to be suggested here is about giving the students enough time for feedback from both teachers and their classmates. It is important to provide the feedback within a safe environment and to keep it separate from marks. Students have to know that feedback is for their enrichment and to improve their knowledge, not just for assessing, marking or judging them. They have to feel secure while asking and listening to comments that could help them to make progress in their learning.

The final suggeSted recommendation from this study is for teachers to focus on planning and brainstorming techniques. They are essential strategies that help students to write better and even improve their writing skills. Teachers might also consider connecting these strategies with the whole task before asking students to begin writing their essays or reports. Brainstorming and planning are important processes for being able to activate students' cognitive abilities about different point of views related to a topic. Teachers have to use them and encourage students to use them while writing.

Recommendations for Curriculum Planners

The findings of this study suggested some recommendations for curriculum planners:

1. Writing mechanics and the base of the language are important components for each grade level to start with. They should be involved in the content, process, and product for each cycle.

2. Writing strategies such as brainstorming, planning and reading, should be integrated into the curriculum, and should be counted as part of the process.

3. Writing is a skill that should be taught in association with technology, using different types of programs. These programs should be suitable to teach academic writing styles and focus on both content and meaning.

Recommendations for Further Studies

The findings of this study revealed some recommendations for future studies.

1. Based on this study, most of the difficulties students` faces in writing are in punctuation and other language mechanics. Studies could be conducted on the importance of correcting specific errors in language mechanics when trying to improve writing skills.

2. Feedback is an important technique to help improve writing skills, and according to the findings of this study, peer feedback was preferred to teacher feedback. So, studies could be applied on the type of feedback that is more beneficial for the students, teacher feedback or peer feedback.

3. This study used quantitative research to collect this information. Future studies could use qualitative or mixed research in order to gather more details and perhaps different findings.

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1. Questionnaire

Students' Views of Difficulties when Writing in English

This questionnaire is designed to investigate students' perceptions of difficulties when writing in English. The data collected by this questionnaire will only be used for educational research purposes and all information will remain confidential. Completing all the answers will take approximately 10 minutes of your time. Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Demography Information: (Please circle the letter of the selected answer)

Age	A.14- 16 years old	B.17- 19 years old	C. 20 + years old
Grade	A.10	B.11	C.12
Section	A. Literature	B. Science	
English Mark	A. Below 50	B. 50- 79	C. 80- 100

Part 1: Writing Difficulties

Please tick only one cell for each item:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I have difficulty in/with:					
1. spelling words.					
2. subject- verb agreement.					
3. joining sentences.					
4. using punctuations.					
5. identifying parts of speech.					
6. writing coherent sentences.					
7. understanding prompts (questions).					
8. using the right tenses.					
9. finding the right words.					
10. sentence structure.					
11. using the right word in correct contexts.					
12. clarifying my ideas.					
13. unfamiliar topics.					
14. translating my ideas from Arabic to English.					
15. organizing my ideas.					
16. using transition words in my writing (e.g., however, therefore, etc.)					
17. using specific text types.					
18. using proper grammar in my writing.					
19. thinking about what to write.					

Part 2: Writing Strategies

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
20. Working in groups enables me to generate more ideas.					
21. Rereading what I have written helps me produce a good piece of writing.					
22. Reading other students' work helps me improve my writing.					
23. Looking at models helps me write better.					
24. Planning helps me organize my ideas.					
25. Writing my task several times helps me improve my writing skill.					
26. Brainstorming ideas helps me find a focus for my writing problems.					
27. Reading helps me explore different writing styles.					
28. Working with others helps me solve my writing problems more easily.					
29. Reading helps me find more ideas for my writing.					
30. Discussing the topic before starting writing helps me write better.					
31. Using an academic style helps me improve my writing skill.					

Part 3: Students' views toward writing

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I enjoy:					
32. writing in English.					
33. writing notes and letters to people.					
34. writing during class time.					
35. exchanging ideas with others.					
36. sharing my ideas with my friends before writing them.					
I write better:					
37. when I get feedback from other students.					
38. when I get feedback from the teacher.					
39. after looking at a model.					
40. when I work alone during class.					
41. when I read about a topic.					
I feel:					
42. writing in English is very difficult.					
43. bored when writing in English.					
44. confident about my writing skill.					
45. embarrassed when someone reads my writing.					

دراسة أراء طلبة المرحلة الثانوية حول استخدام الاستراتيجيات و الصعوبات التي يواجهونها عند الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية

(ملخص)

يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة آراء طلبة المرحلة الثانوية حول استخدام الاستراتيجيات والصعوبات التي يواجهونها عند الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية في مدارس العين في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة. وقد تم استخدام استبانة لجمع البيانات في هذا البحث، والتي تكونت من قسمين، احتوى القسم الأول على البيانات الديموغرافية لعينة الدراسة وهي :العمر، الصف والقسم المستوى الاكاديمي، أما الجزء الثاني فقد احتوى على 45 عبارة يجيب عليها الطلبة على مقياس خماسي التدريج من نوع ليكرت، كما تم تحديد صدق المحتوى وثبات المقياس باستخدام معامل الفا كرونباخ.

واشتملت عينة الدراسة على 360 طالبا من يدرسون اللغة الانجليزية كلغة ثانية في مدارس العين في دولة الامارات العربية المتحدة في العام الحالي 2013-2014 ، ولتحليل النتائج احصائيا ، استخدمت الباحثة الإحصاء الوصفي ممثلا في المتوسطات والانحرافات المعيارية.

وقد أظهرت النتائج ان معظم الطلبة يعانون صعوبات في استخدام علامات الترقيم وبناء الجمل والكلمات والاملاء والنحو، كما اشارت نتائج البحث ان الاسلوب الاكاديمي و العمل الجماعي والتخطيط من اهم الاستراتيجيات المفضلة لدى الطلبة، كما وضحت الدراسة أن الطلبة لديهم أراء متشابهه عموما بما يختص بالكتابة بشكل عام بانها من اصعب المهارات في اللغة الانجليزية و ان الطلبة يرون كتابة الملاحظات والايميلات اسهل من الكتابة الاكاديمية، كما ان معظم الطلبة يرون ان التغذية الراجعة مهمة في تطور مهارة الكتابة، الا انهم يفضلون التغذية الراجعة من أقرانهم بدلا من معلميهم. ومن أهم

جامعة الإمارات العربية المتحدة

كلية التربية

قسم المناهج وطرق التدريس

برنامج الماجستير في التربية

عنوان الرسالة:

دراسة أراء طلبة المرحلة الثانوية حول استخدام الاسترتيجيات و الصعوبات التي يواجهونها عند الكتابة

باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية

اسم الطالبة:

سلمى سعيد سالم الكعبي

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عضواً	د. علي ابراهيم	