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GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

The EFL Essay Writing Difficulties of Egyptian Student Teachers of English: Implications for Essay Writing Curriculum and Instruction

Submitted by

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To

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ABSTRACT

The current study is conducted with the aim of investigating the essay writing difficulties of Egyptian student teachers of English. More specifically, it attempts to fulfil the following three aims: explore the focuses of teaching essay writing at one of the pioneering faculties of education in Egypt; investigate the different essay writing practices used by Egyptian essay writing teachers from teachers as well as their students' perspectives; and identify the essay writing difficulties encountered by Egyptian student teachers of English at the concerned faculty of education from both students and their teachers' perspectives. The current study adopts an interpretive methodology that uses a sequential mixed methods approach to data collection and analysis. Therefore, I administered a questionnaire to 165 student teachers of English and 7 essay writing teachers, conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with 14 student teachers of English and 7 essay writing teachers, and observed nine essay writing sessions of different teachers. Data is analysed quantitatively using SPSS descriptive statistics and qualitatively using exploratory content analysis. Findings of the current study reveal that there are eleven focuses of teaching essay writing at the concerned faculty of education. These focuses have been classified into four main categories: Mechanics/Language, Content, Structure/Layout and Practising Writing. Findings also shed light on the essay writing teachers' practices in relation to planning, teaching, feedback and assessment. Finally, findings show that student teachers of English encounter the following difficulties in their essay writing: planning difficulties, organisational difficulties including coherence, cohesion, and stylistic difficulties, lexical problems, and technical difficulties including grammar, punctuation, spelling and revision and editing. According to the above mentioned findings, a theoretical writing model has been devised and a pedagogical process genre approach to teaching EFL essay writing in Egypt has been proposed. Implications for essay writing curriculum planning and instruction are also included. Finally, suggestions for further research are provided.

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DEDICTAION

I dedicate this thesis to my late Dad, Mum and my wife

who greatly shaped my life and always dreamt to see me a PhD holder.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER I

RATIONALE AND STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

1.1 Introduction 14
1.2 Problem of the Study 15
1.3 Rationale of the Study 16
1.4 Aims of the Study 19
1.5 Significance of the Study 19
1.6 Questions of the Study 21
1.7 Terminology of the Study 22
1.7.1 EFL Essay Writing 22
1.7.2 Essay Writing Difficulties 23
1.8 Overview of the Study 23

CHAPTER II

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

2.1 Introduction 25
2.2 The Nature and Philosophy of the Educational System in Egypt 25
2.3 Teacher Education in Egypt 29
2.3.1 Problems and Issues Facing Egyptian Teacher Education 30
2.4 English Language Teaching in Egypt 32
2.4.1 English Language Teaching at the Pre-University Stages 32
2.4.2 EFL Teacher Education in Egypt 36
2.5 Prospective EFL Teacher Education 37
2.5.1. ELT Pedagogic Component 37
2.5.2 ELT Cultural Component 38
2.5.3 ELT Academic Component 38
2.5.3.1 Essay and Linguistic Drills 38
2.6 Conclusion 43

CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction 44
3.2 Theory and Research in ESL/EFL Writing 44
3.2.1 Approaches to Teaching ESL/EFL Writing 48
3.2.2 ESL/EFL Writers' Uniqueness 54
3.2.3 Writing Defined 55
3.2.4 Purposes of Writing 56
3.2.5. Importance of EFL/L2 Writing 57

3.3 Factors Affecting EFL/ESL Writing Development 58
3.3.1 Learning-Related Factors 58
3.3.2 Instructional-Related Factors 63
3.3.3 Socio-Cultural-Related Factors 77
3.4 EFL Writers' Difficulties 81
3.4.1 Prewriting Difficulties 82
3.4.2 Coherence Difficulties 86
3.4.3 Cohesion Difficulties 88
3.4.4 Lexical Difficulties 94
3.4.5 Technical Writing Difficulties 98
3.5 Conclusion 105

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 Introduction 106
4.2 The Philosophical Assumptions 106
4.2.1 The Ontological Assumptions 106
4.2.2 Theoretical Framework 107
4.3 Research Methodology 110
4.3.1 Research Methods 110
4.3.2 Data Collection Methods 111
4.3.3 Research Procedures 115
4.3.4 Trustworthiness 117
4.4 Development of Research Instruments 120
4.4.1 Development of Questionnaire 120
4.4.2 Development of Interview 125
4.4.3 Development of Observation Sheet 127
4.5 Data Analysis 130
4.5.1 Analysis of Questionnaires 133
4.5.2 Analysis of Interviews 133
4.5.3 Analysis of Observation Records 135
4.6 Ethical Issues 136
4.7 Limitations 137
4.8 Conclusion 138

CHAPTER V

DATA ANALYSIS & RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction 139
5.2 The Focuses of Teaching Essay Writing at the University Level in Egypt 139
5.2.1 Mechanics/Language 141
5.2.2 Content 145
5.2.3 Structure 149
5.2.4 Practising Writing 154
5.3 Teachers' Practices 160
5.3.1 Planning Procedures 162
5.3.2 Teaching 166
5.3.3 Feedback Practices 178
5.3.4 Assessment Practices 182
5.4 Essay Writing Difficulties 191
5.4.1 Prewriting Difficulties 193
5.4.2 Organisational Difficulties 197
5.4.3 Stylistic Difficulties 205
5.4.4 Lexical Difficulties 208
5.4.5 Technical Difficulties 211
5.4.6 Other Difficulties 220
5.4.7 Emerging Themes 222
5.5 Conclusion 231

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

6.1 Introduction 232
6.2 Learning Factors 233
6.2.1 Psychological Challenges 233
6.2.2 Proficiency in English 236
6.2.3 Students' Prior Knowledge 237
6.3 Instructional Factors 238
6.3.1 Teachers' Qualifications and Experience 238
6.3.2 Teachers' Negative Attitudes towards Teaching EFL Essay Writing 239
6.3.3 Teachers' Professional Development 239
6.3.4 Course Description and Assessment 241
6.4 Institutional Factors 243
6.4.1 Teaching Workload 243
6.4.2 Teaching Large Classes 244
6.4.3 Course Duration 245

6.4.4 Resources and Facilities 245
6.5 Contextual Factors 246
6.5.1 Socio-Political Context 246
6.5.2 Socio-Cultural Context 248
6.6 Implications and Contribution to Knowledge 256
6.6.1 Theoretical Contribution 256
6.6.2 Pedagogical Contribution 259
6.7 Suggestions for Further Research 269
6.8 Reflection on my PhD Journey of Research 272
6.9 Conclusion 275
REFERENCES 278
APPENDICES 303