



Investigating the Role of English Writing Competences in Promoting Students' Academic Expressions

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ARTICLE INFO

Received: February 11, 2019

Accepted: February 28, 2019

Published: March 31, 2019

Volume: 2

Issue: 2

DOI: 10.32996/ijllt.2019.2.2.27

KEYWORDS

WC, SS, AE, EFL, L1 and L2

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to investigate the problems students encounter at the Arab Countries Universities, in writing competency activities. The researcher has adopted the qualitative method as well as a test as a tool for collecting data relevant to the study. It is attempted to bring to the light, the importance of writing competences in process of learning English language. The sample of this study comprises of (60) of non-specialized students who study English as requirement at the Arab Countries Universities. The marks obtained from the test were compared. Accordingly, the results have revealed that the students encountered difficulties in writing competence activities. The result has shown that the test significance indicates that there are highly different among students. Therefore, this indicates that students face difficulties in writing competency activities.

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing competence is defined as knowledge and competence which we need in order to facilitate the conveying textual meaning for performing academic and profession tasks. Many writers believe that English writing competence is very essential for second English learners, while others believe that English writing competence is dying out which this study is aiming at highlighting. The reasons go beyond the importance of English writing competence for second language learners. Firstly, teaching English writing competence at the Arab Countries Universities. Secondly the importance of English writing competence as foundation for student's future careers to write various professional forms such as business documents including business reports, letters and emails. Moreover, in academic fields, English writing competence is regarded as the most influential competences. In this study, the researcher discovers the variety of teaching English writing competence techniques that are important for second language. The researcher uses a scientific approach to help the student's good command achieve English language writing competence. The researcher also shows the key elements of writing competence skill such as punctuation, spelling and the correct grammar are essential.

2. AIMS AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to investigate the importance of Writing Competences (WC) in developing Students' Self-expression (SS) and Academic Expression (AE) through writing a guided composition. The scope of the study is limited to (60) of non-specialized students who study English as requirement at the Arab Countries Universities (2018-2019).

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Writing Competence (WC)

Writing competence in a foreign language represents the greatest challenge to the students at all stages, particularly essay writing competence because in this activity, writing competence is usually extended and therefore, it becomes more demanding than in the case of writing short a paragraph.

Richards and Renadya (2002-2003) claim that "there is no doubt that writing competence is the most difficult competence for L2 learners to master". The difficulties appear not only in generating and organizing ideas, but also in translating these ideas into notions into legible text". Yet it is very necessary to look into the dynamics of writing competence and its teaching, as writing competence is a competence that not only is tested in every valid language examination, but also a competence that learners

should possess and demonstrate in academic contexts.

In academic field, English writing competence is regarded as the most influential competences. Writing competence includes numerous considerations and choices to be made regarding “higher level competences” such as content, structure and organization, and “lower level competences”, such as punctuation, choice of appropriate vocabulary themes and grammatical structure.

Writing competence must be practiced and learned through experience. By putting together concepts and sowing problems, the writer engages in “a two-way interactions between continuously developing knowledge and continuously developing text.” Bereiter & Scardania,(1987, p.12).

Indeed, academic writing competence demands continuous effort and practice in composing, developing and analyzing ideas. Compared to students writing competence in their native language [L1], however, students writing competence in their [L2] have to also acquire proficiency in the use of the language as well as writing competence strategies, techniques and competences, the students want to write close to error-free texts and they enroll in English competences courses in order to develop their competences which includes writing competence.

The ability to write is not naturally acquired competence. It is learned or transmitted as a set of practices in formal instructional settings or other environments. Writing competence must be practiced and learned through experiences. Omaggio Hadly, 1993 argues that “writing competence also includes composing which implies the ability either to tell or retell pieces of information in the form of narratives or description, or to transform in formation into new text as in expository or argumentative writing competence.” The writer thought that writing competence is the act of composing thought, which can create problems for the students, especially for those writing competence is in a second language [L2], in academic contexts.

According to the writer mentioned above formulating new ideas can be difficult because it involves transforming information. Writing competence constitutes the graphical representation of language; it is the symbolic presentation of the sounds produced in a language (S.S.Danigrahi-133).

The writer argues that there is a close link between each letter and the sound associated with it in a

particular language. Lynn Holaday (in Stephen T Chudi, 1997-35) points out “the way to become a better writer is to write” . Most students who are still not able to write a correct paragraph using the basic structures of English language, they have learnt. However, why do students still find difficulties in writing competence when their teachers exert more efforts to assist their students to achieve good results? The answer to this question is not easy but it includes the possibility of difficulty assigned with learning writing competence for non-native speakers around the globe not just Sudanese students. Also the problem of acquiring writing competence.

3.2 Writing Competence Connect with Other Competences

Harold Rosen points out the difficult situation in which a writer can find him or herself as “the writer is a lonely figure cut off from the stimulus and corrective of listeners. He must be a predicator of reactions and act on his predictions. He writes with one hand tied behind his back, being robbed of gesture. He is robbed too of the tone of his voice and the aid of clues the environment provides.” Writing competence is the most essential as one can be able to express in written form and there by more novel ideas from his mind.

It is noticed that in academic field, English writing competence plays influential role compared to other competences, so attention should be paid to study for Sudanese secondary school English language learners have great tendency to be good listeners, readers, speakers and writers in English foreign language. These students need careful attention towards these competences, however, the general command of students’ language is reported to be poor, namely writing competence.

3.3 Teaching Writing Competence

Writing competence is the most important activity in learning a language. S.S.Danigrahi (p-28) points out “writing competence depends on other competences, unless a person acquainted with the letters of a particular language and its pronunciation, he cannot be able to write clearly and in accurate manner. As mentioned above writing competence linked with listening and speaking competences when the English learner master the two communicative competences, he will indeed master writing competence. In teaching writing competence some techniques are to be followed and these techniques should be imported to the learners of EFL. The students should know using capital and small letters while writing competence as well as legibility and clarity in writing competence at the Faculty of Languages and Translation at King Khalid University.

3.4 Approach of Teaching Writing Competence

Approach is “Self-evident in nature. It tells what is to be taught in the class. Hence, it is higher than the method. It is at first priority on the part of the teacher and then he can proceed towards applying the method.

The writer points out method and approach working together to fulfill the aim of education still than we can differentiate them. Method is a procedure applied in the process of education.

The writer points out three important aspects which need in teaching namely “What, why and how of the subject, matter or content. What aspect deals with the proper approach and how aspect with the method of teaching and why aspect is fulfilled by the various instructional objectives given on the text or content. The objectives which are deliberately made before will hence answer the question of “why” in teaching a particular content or subject matter.

However most secondary school students find it difficult to write essays free of errors of various types. Therefore, teaching of essay writing competence needs to anticipate certain common types of errors. They may also find other types of errors which can be revealed by analyzing the written products or essays of the students. These are the conventions which are usually followed by the teachers of writing competence when analyzing students' errors.

3.5 Focus on Accuracy

Accuracy refers to ability of the learners to produce grammatically correct sentences. The learners should not only know correct grammatical rules of the language also able to speak and write accurately. (According to Dr. Shilpi Rishi Srivastava – Dept of humanities -55- www.newmanpublication.com.)

3.6 Focus on Fluency

Fluency refers to a level of proficiency in communication. It is the ability to produce written and spoken sentences with ease, efficiency, without pause or a breakdown of communication. (Shilpi Rishi Srivastava. Dept of Humanities – 55- www.newmanpublication.com).

3.7 Focus on Text

The writer thought at some specific features of academic text including, text types, rhetorical purpose, register and linguistic accuracy, while many of these features may seem obvious, often the students especially those just entering tertiary education, find it far from straight forward to know exactly what is expected.

For ease of reference in discussing text types, we continue to use these labels, but we emphasize that you cannot assume that knowledge of what to expect in a certain text type is shared by students.

The essay for example, may contain different elements depending on whether it is framed as a critical review, a discussion, a personal response or and exposition.

Our implicit knowledge of what to expect from text types in response to certain prompts, such as discuss, critically evaluate, compare and contrast informs the judgements. The text types vary in response to the function that the text performs, which is not always reflected in the descriptive term applied to it.

In secondary school the researcher thought probably the most commonly labeled text type is the essay as most students will have been taught a basic essay outline, Introduction, body and conclusion at school. This linear structure represents a particular preference of Anglo-American academic writing competence. (Reid, 1984) that students from other cultures may need to be made aware of the writer points out the alternative title of argument essay, highlights one of the reasons for the pre-eminence of this text type in academic writing competence. It has evolved as a vehicle for synthesis, opinion, and theory, all of which imply argument of different sorts and which help to account for disparate nature of what is known as an essay.

3.8 Focus on Purpose

The researcher found out a variety of reasons that they can aid to critical thinking, understanding and memory, to extend students' learning beyond lectures and other formal meetings to improve students' communication competences, and to train students as future professionals in particular disciplines. This range of reasons for writing competence may not be so apparent to students who may see writing competence as mainly an assessment.

In order to apply way of focus on purpose students should follow the activity below:

Ask students to brainstorm individually all the types of writing competence, they have done in the last few weeks (e.g. Shopping lists, text messages, notes on lectures, experimental results, birthday cards, poetry). In small groups have students put the different types of writing competence into some form of classification. You might want to suggest functional classification such as memory aids, social communication, learning about, for assessment, some forms of writing competence will fall into more than one category.

In a whole class discussion, narrow the focus to academic writing competence activities such as notes made on reading or in lectures, essay drafts and laboratory reports. Discuss the purposes of the different types of academic writing competence students have done. Ask students to consider the different audiences, the specific purpose of this form of writing competence, the kind of language, information and evidence, they need to draw upon. Extend the discussion to include other types of writing competence students will do in the future.

3.9 Focus on Process

The process approaches focus primarily on what writers do as they write rather than on textual features, but depending on the writer's immediate task. These approaches may also consider text features. The process approach includes different stages, which can be combined with other aspect of teaching writing competence.

Not all writers move through the stages included in process approaches. Some stages may be helpful and others superfluous to any given writing competence task. Stages of writing competence process can happen in various orders at different points. Lectures can help clarify students' misconceptions about writing competence by explicitly teaching the stages of the writing competence processes.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This part is concerned with the methodology of the study. A detailed description of the subject and setting has provided the design of the instrument, procedure of data collection and the method of the data analysis, validity and reliability of the test is presented.

4.2 Subjects: The Students

The subject of this study was (60) of non-specialized students who study English as requirement at the Arab Countries Universities (2018-2019).

These students were randomly selected because they have already had background about writing composition in English language. Their ages range between (20 to 22). They have the same educational background. Arabic language is their mothers' tongue of most of those students.

4.3 Instrument of Data Collection: Writing Competence Test

The material of this research are originally written as answers to writing competence test designed by the researcher, to test subject's ability to express their

ideas in two different sessions, the students were provided with a writing competence topic and were allowed one hour to finish the topic.

4.4 Procedures

(60) Of non-specialized students who study English as requirement at the Arab Countries Universities (2018-2019) were asked to write a guided composition during the class, the students were allowed one hour to finish the task.

The topic was "A Journey that You Made" after that the papers were collected, numbered and marked by the researcher and three different teachers.

4.5 Validity and Reliability

4.5.1 Validity of the Test

The test was administrated to an expert judge who related its relevance.

4.5.2 Reliability of the Test

To estimate reliability, the researcher considered the test. The students were asked to write a composition. They were not allowed to ask each other.

4.5.3 Pilot Study: Introduction

Nunan (1992-145) points out that all research instruments should have piloting phase. Bell (1993-48) also believes that, "all data gathering instrument should be piloted to test how long it takes recipient to complete them to check that all questions and instructions are clear and enable you remove any items which do not yield usable data".

The writing competence test items were piloted priors to the main study. Non-specialized students who study English as requirement at the Arab Countries Universities participated in the study piloting.

4.5.4 The Pilot Study was conducted for the following aims:

Give the researcher a clear idea about the time needed for the test. Determine whether the texts questions and instructions were clearly written. Identify any problems. Identify any adjustment that may be needed.

After conducting the piloting study, the researcher notes that some students did not understand all the instructions, therefore, the researcher further explained these instructions.

The following part has presented the analysis the piloting study, which is the student's writing competence test. "Kash Avarz's (1994) model was

used to analyze student's writing competence products.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher has used a test as a tool in the collection of data relevant to this study. The researcher has designed the test to identify the problems encountered non-specialized students who

study English as requirement at the Arab Countries Universities (2018-2019) in learning English language writing competences so as to come up with solutions to solve problems that encountered them. The tables below are going to illustrate what has been stated earlier.

Type of Errors	Syntactic Errors		Semantic Errors		Spelling Errors		Miscellaneous Errors		Morphological Errors	
	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive
60										
Frequencies	45	15	35	25	48	12	36	24	40	20
Percentages	75%	25%	61.6%	38.4%	80.0%	20%	60%	40%	63.4%	36.6%

Analysis of Students' Test

A. Syntactic Errors

The table above illustrates the percentage and frequency of the answers of the study sample that concern with the Syntactic Errors and shows that most of the sample answers were negative which are represented by the percentage (75%). This justifies that students need to be trained and developed in how they can construct sentences in their correct forms.

B. Semantic Errors

The table above illustrates the percentage and frequency of the answers of the study sample that are concerned with the Semantic Errors and shows that most of the sample answers were negative which are represented by the percentage (61.6%). This justifies that students need to be trained and developed how they can choose the correct meaning of words.

C. Spelling Errors

The table above illustrates the percentage and frequency of the answers of the study sample that are concerned with the Spelling Errors and shows that most of the sample answers were negative which are represented by the percentage (80%). This justifies that students need to be trained and developed how they can write spelling of words correctly.

D. Miscellaneous Errors

The table above illustrate the percentage and frequency of the answers of the study sample that

concern with the Miscellaneous Errors and shows that most of the sample answers were negative which are represented by the percentage (60%). This justifies that students need to be trained and developed in how they can make their finishing touches and lay out of writing competence.

E. Morphological Errors

The table above illustrates the percentage and frequency of the answers of the study sample that are concerned with the questions and shows that most of the sample answers were negative which are represented by the percentage (63.4%). This justifies that students need to be trained and developed how they can generate words by using derivation in terms of prefixes and suffixes.

6. CONCLUSION

After comparing and analyzing the results with the main hypothesis. The test significance indicates that there is highly different among students' English language writing competences. Therefore, this indicates that non-specialized students who study English as requirement at the Arab Countries Universities (2018-2019) face difficulties in English language writing competences.

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