



## RESEARCH ARTICLE



## AN ANALYTICAL STUDY ON DIFFICULTIES AND SOLUTIONS IN ENGLISH WRITING SKILLS AT SAMTAH UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, JAZAN UNIVERSITY, KSA

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This study talks about the importance of learning better writing skills and the challenges faced by English students at Samtah College, Jazan University. It discusses the main reasons behind the problems and gives a few remedies to the students, if they want to write in English successfully and want to promote their communicative competence.

Writing is one of the very important communicative skills, there is no doubt that it is a very complex process. The difficulties faced by the students in mastering this skill are discussed in this article. If students are not able to write well it could lead to a major drawback in their performance in college as well as in their career after completing their education. They have to learn the art of error-free writing to excel at academic and professional levels. This study is learner-centered in which the problems faced by students, the reasons behind them, and their solutions are discussed. Writing is not just a talent that is the exclusive domain of those good at English. It is a skill, which can be taught, practised, and mastered like any other skill.

**Keywords:** *writing process, motivation, challenges, undergraduate students, Jazan*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

English has become a very important language in the world, it is the official language of 53 countries and more than 1 billion people speak English. So it is the most commonly spoken language in the world. It is the language of the internet. More than half of the content on the internet is written in English. It is the language of science and technology. Many scientific papers are written in English. English is the language of science, computers, and tourism. Besides educational purposes, good English writing proficiency increases the chances of getting a better job anywhere in the world in a multinational company within the home country or finding jobs abroad. Learning English and particularly writing skills is essential if the student intends to pursue higher education. On one hand well-written documents, applications, posts, reports, emails, and more, are part of the daily life of a college student and on the other hand, the ability to communicate ideas through writing is in high demand for employers in any industry. It can persuade customers to buy a product or convince people to invest in a company. Fine writing skills help to convey thoughts and ideas in written form making it more expressive and coherent, which results in better communication and understanding.

It's a standard practice to email, instant message, or text your co-workers. The importance of English writing skills cannot be ignored.

### 1.1 AIMS OF THE STUDY

This study aims to help the students write better by helping them to analyze the areas of difficulty and finding the source of their problems and enabling them to overcome those difficulties. It discusses

some of the challenges faced by students at Samtah College as lack of vocabulary, difficulty in framing sentences and putting their ideas into writing, lack of exposure to English books, grammatical errors, spelling mistakes, over-dependence on electronic gadgets, etc. It also discusses some of the solutions that can be helpful to teachers and students.

### 1.2 SCOPE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

By understanding the areas of difficulty in English writing skills at Samtah College, it is expected that the result of this study can be used for reference in future endeavors of teaching and learning. It is hoped that it will help build better writing skills. This skill is of extreme importance; the students cannot overlook its significance. They have to acquire this expertise to express themselves, write their exams, research papers, and presentations, search for jobs, write emails, and more.

Teachers here find it challenging to motivate the students to read more in English, to persuade them to memorize the new vocabulary learned and use it in different situations, like speaking, writing their exams, sending emails, making presentations, writing reports, etc.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Britannica Dictionary, 'Writing is defined as any conventional system of marks and signs that represent the utterance of a language'. Writing is an extremely complex cognitive activity.

For many English students learning to write correctly is more difficult than learning to speak fluently. The reason is that written communication is more formal than speech and more mistakes are allowed in spoken communication. A good writer is a



person who can communicate his ideas correctly and clearly through the medium of written word.

Kellogg stated that 'advanced writing skills are an important aspect of academic performance as well as of subsequent work-related performance' (Kellogg R. T., (2007)). Gautama discussed in his study, 'Writing skill is a product of ingenuity carved through knowledge, learning, creativity and intellectual uprightiness. An individual with sound writing skills is regarded as high in dignity and receives elevated opportunities everywhere in competitive examinations, job opportunities, promotions, and social services. (Gautam, (2019))

For Rivers (1968, p.243), writing refers to the expression of ideas in a systematic way to organize the graphic conventions of the language.

Ariana states, 'Writing skills help the learner to become independent, comprehensible, fluent and creative in writing, important abilities which help learners put their thoughts in a meaningful form and to mentally tackle the message properly'. (Ariana, (2010).)

In this age of science and technology when the students are relying more and more on electronic gadgets and working mostly online, is it really important to write with pen on paper? The answer is yes. It is essential for students' overall cognitive development. The teachers should encourage the students to write more. They should provide a supporting, inspirational, and encouraging environment for writing.

To make them think critically and to make the learning process effective the teachers have to follow the writing process. They have to use different

techniques like brainstorming ideas, prewriting, collecting information, taking notes, and using facts and opinions in their writing, etc.

Each student has a different potential. Some have an artistic and poetic bent of mind, they are more imaginative, and they can think more creatively. Some can use more factual information in their writings. Hence, they can excel in different types of text, according to their varied abilities.

### 3. DIFFICULTIES FACED BY THE STUDENT

To overcome the difficulties in writing the students should analyze their areas of difficulty. They have to take effective measures to get control of them to learn effective writing skills. Students and teachers have to focus on the challenges they face in learning and teaching writing skills.

- **Vocabulary**

Lack of vocabulary in English causes the students many difficulties in writing a draft. They have ideas in mind but they lack vocabulary in English to express themselves. They are unable to communicate their feelings, beliefs, and ideas because of this obstacle.

- **Grammar:** It plays a very important role in writing skills. Students face problems in grammar. Many students face problems regarding the right use of tenses. They should build a strong foundation in grammar.

- **Sentence structure and word order:** Students find it difficult to frame sentences correctly because the word order in English is different from their first language.



- **Difficulty in word sounds, spellings, and meanings:** Students find it difficult to memorize the *heteronyms*, the words that spell the same but have different sounds and meanings, like *Close* (to move to cover an opening/ nearby) *Tear* (to rip and pull apart in pieces/ a drop of liquid secreted from eyes). and *homophones*, words with the same pronunciation but different meanings like *new/knew*, *hole/whole*, *site/sight*, *sole/soul*, *steal/steel*, *male/mail*, *steal/steel*, etc. English learning requires a lot of skill and care, they often find it difficult to pronounce a few words like *live/ life*, *paid/ said*, *wind/kind*, *row/cow*.
- **Difficulty in getting started:** Some students have concentration problems. They find it tiring to focus and they struggle with attention problems. Writing an assignment requires a relaxed mind and they are unable to organize their ideas.
- **Cognition problem:** students are often unable to generate ideas, and they have difficulty in organizing the ideas. For them, writing becomes a laborious task.

takes time, focus, and patience.

According to Ronald T. Kellogg, 'Writing skills typically develop over a course of more than two decades as a child matures and learns the craft of composition through late adolescence and into early adulthood.' (Kellogg R. T., (2008).)

Most important in this regard is the practice of writing on an everyday basis. Consistent schedule can be very helpful in building a steady and persistent writing habit.

If the students are facing difficulty in getting started, the writing process to plan, generate and review can be helpful. The student writer attempts to solve the question of what to write and how to write. Starting with the brainstorming of ideas, and just writing the points as notes, generating a written text onto paper, and then reviewing it. A Step by step guidance can be easily understood. Hence breaking down the learning of the writing process into digestible blocks.

#### 4. CHALLENGES FACED BY THE TEACHERS AND THEIR SOLUTIONS

The key element in acquiring writing skills is Motivation. Motivation helps learners to improve their interest in writing. It also encourages the learner to engage in writing. 'A Motivated learner contributes in the classroom activities and shows interest in developing writing skills'. (Dhanya, (2019))

The most difficult situation is that students are not ready to learn. Students are less motivated to learn writing skills because it is a complex process and it





The teacher has to help the student to build a strong grammar foundation. Students should focus on the correct tenses.

If the students are facing spelling and vocabulary problems, the teacher has to motivate them to read more. Noting down by hand the new vocabulary, its meaning, usage, and memorizing spellings can be a very effective technique.

Knowledge of word order in sentences, using multiple adjectives before nouns, (*they are supposed to follow the correct order- size, age, shape, color, origin*), learning to put adverbs before the verb (*I never come late*), and after the "be" verb (*I am never late*)

Practice can markedly improve college students' writing when it is done in the context of professionally relevant task domains that motivate efforts to learn. (Kellogg R. T., (2007))

## 5. METHODOLOGY

### RESEARCH DESIGN & PARTICIPANTS

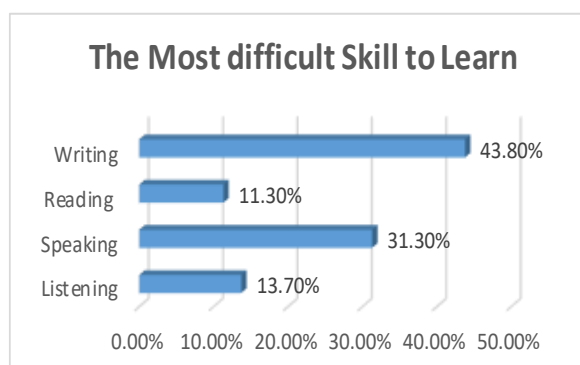
This study analyzed the data collected by the students' survey. The questionnaire was based on the difficulties faced by them in writing skills. The survey consists of 9 questions, each question was translated into Arabic to get the precise and error-free result.

The sample group consists of 80 female students (from 19 to 23 years of age), enrolled in the English department. The survey asked the students their opinion and self-assessment, and the data was collected to identify the problems faced by them in learning writing skills.

## 6. RESULT FINDINGS AND QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

As previously mentioned this study is conducted in Samtah College, to analyze the difficulties in learning writing skills. The data was collected using Google Forms, and the survey which consists of nine questions was sent to the students via WhatsApp. Qualitative Data Analysis has been used, to analyze the opinion of the students studying English. The type of questions used in the survey were closed-ended Yes/No questions, multiple choice questions, and comment box open-ended questions. The sample is collected from 80 students from different levels, enrolled in English Department. The data was collected electronically by sending the survey to the students. Their responses were recorded and the data analysis is given below.

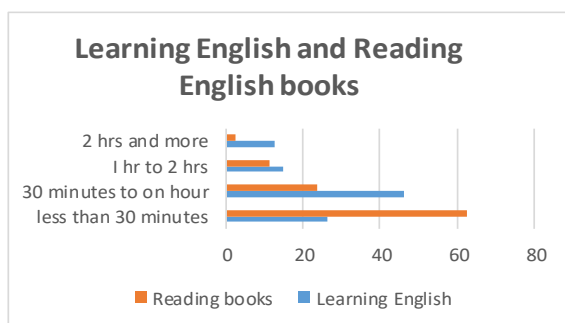
According to the result findings, 43.8 % of the students believe that the most difficult skill to learn is writing skill. Due to many reasons, most of the students found this skill more complex and difficult to learn. Some of the reasons as told by the students are difficulty in remembering spellings, problems in framing sentences, and grammar rules.





### TIME SPENT IN LEARNING ENGLISH AND READING ENGLISH BOOKS

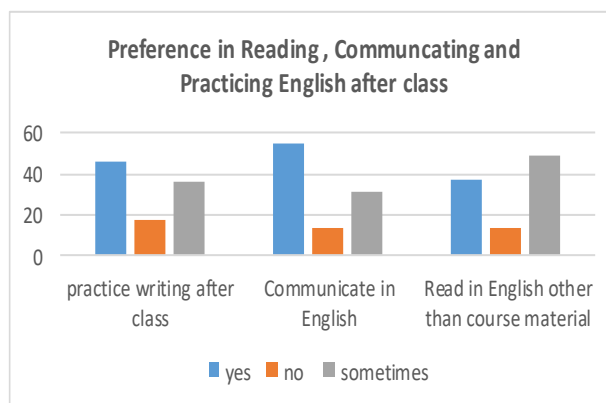
The survey results found that there is a desire to learn English among students. Every day they spend 30 minutes to 1 hour learning English. But most of the students aren't interested in reading English books or any other material in English, in their free time. A very small number of students are interested in reading English books. Survey results can be seen below.



The students study English as part of their curriculum, and when asked about the use of English after class, 46.3 % responded positively. But, 17.5% of the students don't practice English outside their classroom. Whereas 36 % practice it sometimes.

In response to the question related to their liking of communicating in English, 55% of students answered positively. 13.7 % are not interested in communicating in English whereas, 31% communicate in English sometimes. Only 37% of students like to read in English any material other than their course books. 13% don't like to read English books and 48 % like to read other books sometimes. It is observed that students like to read and communicate in English but they face certain obstacles. If they can overcome it in some way or the

other, they are interested in learning the English language and using it. The data findings are given in the graph below.



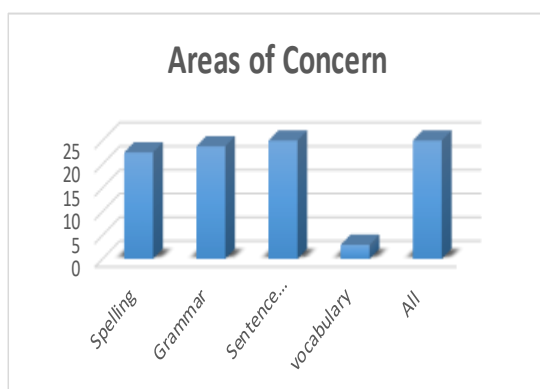
### AREAS OF DIFFICULTY

As discussed earlier it is found that students are attracted to learning the language and using it, in their studies as well as outside the classroom, but they face certain issues which make them hesitant and less confident resulting in avoiding the use of language. Students are nervous and afraid of making mistakes, they are self-conscious and they don't want to be embarrassed in front of their teachers and friends, so they simply keep themselves away from experimenting with communication in English. Some of the areas of difficulty as discussed earlier are-spelling, grammar, sentence structure, word order, and vocabulary, etc. 25% of the students face all types of problems, and the same percentage face problems in sentence structure and word order. They complain that they face problems in arranging the words in sentences. 23.8 % have problems with the correct use of Grammar. They complain that they easily forget the grammar rules. 22 % of students face problems with spelling. They found the English



spellings confusing. They said that the English words are long and they are difficult to memorize. 3% have problems specifically in vocabulary. They know the meanings of words but when it comes to writing the word, its spelling, and its order in the sentences, they find it difficult.

The survey result graph is shown below.



## 7. CONCLUSION

Planned and steady practice should be the basic principle to help the students. Students should catch every possible chance to use what they have learned, either linguistic or pragmatic knowledge, into practice. The teachers should provide guidance, and timely feedback has to be given which could result in improvement. Students should know that practicing handwriting is crucial.

Timely and useful feedback has a very significant role in the improvement process. Peer and teacher correction techniques should be used to develop the student's writing skills. If the student is willing to improve and develop good writing skills, they should participate actively in the learning process.

Writing activities should be structured in such a way that they help the students to be better writers and critics of their writings.

English is a tricky language. Students should practice heteronyms and homophones. Practice makes perfect. Reading is the counterpart of writing. It helps to reinforce the understanding of foundation skills such as spelling, punctuation, and grammar and also helps to gain knowledge on text organization, writing dialogue, and use of literary devices, etc.

Students should identify their areas of weaknesses, where they fall back, and work on that quarter specifically. Teachers have to encourage the students that writing is an essential skill and can easily be mastered with practice. The habit of reading and writing every day is required. Good writing skill is beneficial for them not only academically, but also personally and professionally.

## 8. APPENDIX - RESEARCH QUESTIONS

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Qtbd0PMcsNOJHpJNYQLs-wV62u-QN97h/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Qtbd0PMcsNOJHpJNYQLs-wV62u-QN97h/view?usp=drive_link)

- Do you like to communicate in English?
- What do you think is the most difficult skill to learn?
- How much time do you spend a day, learning English?
- How much time do you spend reading English books?
- What are your areas of difficulty in writing?
- Do you like to read other than course material?
- Do you practice writing after class?
- What are the difficulties you face when writing English?
- In your opinion, how to overcome these difficulties?



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