Investigating the challenges encountered by the Omani students in English writing (ENG102) at Scientific College of Design Muscat

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Abstract— In this study, researcher has worked towards investigating the existing challenges being encountered by the Omani students in English writing. The challenges in the English writing for the students of Middle Eastern countries vary as per their culture, environment, geography, attitude, age, skill set, academic preferences, mother-tongue, domestic influences over the educational system, etc. To identify the barriers and to overcome those hurdles, the study aims at assessing the respondents' characteristics, skills, abilities, interest, etc along with the teachers motivating skills, qualification and clarity through academic environment challenges. However the study solely assesses the participants (students) and their opinion upon English writing rather than focusing on general subjects or large population. To structure the study with precise objective and narrowed aim the researcher had decided upon the Arabic students of Scientific College of Design (SCD), Muscat, Oman. The data has been collected from the students studying at the Scientific College of Design, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman. Data has been collected for three semesters Spring-2017, Summer-2017 and Fall-2018 from the voluntary students with the sample size of 106. The study adopts Cronbach Alpha, Karl Pearson (1-tailed) and ANOVA as the statistical analyses methodologies. Through the data analyses and the interpretation processes, the gathered outcome revealed that demographic profile, skills sets, domestic environment, academic environment and attitude certainly has a significant relationship with the challenges encountered by Arabic students in enhancing the level of their English writing.

Keywords: Omani Students, English Writing. Challenges, Arabic students in Muscat, Scientific College of Design

1. INTRODUCTION

The English language as a medium in many countries had been either followed as ESL (English as Second Language) or EFL (English as Foreign Language) where the people who communicate with their mother tongue seeks it as difficult to either understand the words or to write the language towards communicating in varied environments (career, education, society functions, parties, social media, etc). Mainly in countries like China, Japan, India, Korea, Middle East, etc the EFL/ ESL has been identified as an essential communication tool that has to be developed during early childhood in order to make the challenges little less (Alfaqiri, 2018). Though there are barriers in languages, adapting to one language along with their mother tongue would not be a huge issue for people from different culture. Culture and demography mainly poses a threat and challenge to the non-English natives towards communicating with the English speakers. Hence improvising their abilities and capabilities along with skills towards English as language is necessary.

Mainly in Middle Eastern countries, India, Japan and other countries, the practices of mother tongue as native language and English as supplementary language has been followed in educational sector where the students suffer to an extent where the motivation and interest diminishes as they get older. To improvise these issues, in Arab countries, teachers have identified that, educating the children/ students and individuals in both listening and writing of English by making the English language as primary or making the students to communicate with others the same way they would make use of their mother tongue will be a solution (Alnufaie, 2012). Henceforth analysing the effect of teaching and learning English as language, especially writing English among the Arabic students in Oman, Muscat would be the primary aim of the research.

As researches insisted in the earlier discussions, challenges could vary as per the countries and the environment. Academic environment in different culture and countries would adapt various processes in teaching English as text/ writing. Writing could be of functional, personal, situational and controlled (Hadi, 2016). Identifying the writing and practising the improvisations as per the requirement is a very important factor that has been neglected recently in the educational sector, which again poses as threat to the students to cope up and adapt. This study specifically focuses upon the English as writing among the Arab students. Hence analysing the factors that affects and solutions that could enhance the writers will be appropriate here.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Al Rabhai (2014), the low proficiency of English language in elementary schools gives way to the next level of primary, secondary and further tertiary level of education in poor teaching of English to the students. The lack of English skills from the earliest age affects their education, employment and business profiles as students grow, but the awareness of the English language and its efficiency remains the same.

The findings of Elachachi, (2015) illustrated as Arab learners in writing English arrive with them their cultural background that disturb their language writing, it is identified that EFL studying may not be lucrative if the basic culture in native language is not noticed, or if the variation between native language and English language writing methods are not formed abundantly distinct.

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According to Hussein (2017), the Arab learners and Iraqi students in general face several difficulties such as communication and lack of English skills such as listening which hinders them from speaking in English. Without the listening of English language it is difficult for them to make pronunciation and forming a sentence, fluency in their speaking, etc.

Literally, Alrashidi and Phan (2015) stated that the absence of vulnerability to English language in everyday communication is examined as one of the challenges which restrict Arab learners' potential to bring out a prominent English eloquence and adequacy.

According to Ross, (2015) the Arab students faced environmental obstacles in developing their English language, such as the proficiency of the mother tongue, less space to learn English, and segregated culture. The uncomfortable home environment, lack of awareness of the Parents from the Arab culture, lack of conductive learning environment, less interaction of the parents all together affects the learning of English language of the Arab students.

Conceptual Framework

Main Factor	Sub-factor	Author	Year	Findings
Demo-graphic profile	Age	Al Rabhai	2014	Absence of teaching English from the basic education
	Gender	Khaiyali, Nuseir and Kharruba	2018	Challenges of coeducation
		Ahmed	2015	Problems of mixed gender classrooms
	Education	Rizi and Et. Al.	2014	Lack of Audio-visual programs
		Barsoum	2019	Poor educational quality
	Nativity	Rass	2015	Nativity of Arabic
		Rabab'ah	2014	Teachers are native speakers
Skill set	Reading	Murshidi	2014	Lacking English awareness due to cultural status
	Listening	Hussein	2017	Poor interaction and fluency
	Speaking	Elttayef and Hussein	2017	Demotivated by the educators
		Ashour and Sobhi	2017	Linguistic difficulties
		Preece	2018	Inadequacy of English proficiency
	Pronun-ciation	Khaiyali, Nuseir and Kharruba	2018	Absence of English aptitude skills
		Abdelgadir	2016	Lack of practicing English
Academic environment		Elttayef and Hussein	2017	Discouragement, Peaceful environment in and outside of the school, etc.
		Akbari	2015	Huddled classrooms, less teaching hours, absence of aptitude efficiency.

Challenges encountered by Arab Students in Learning English

Domestic Environment		Ross	2015	No conductive environment, communication.
Attitude		Fareed and Ashraf	2016	Mental tension, Influence of Arab language
		Badi	2015	Cultural awareness, lack of knowledge in English
		Sobhi and Preece	2017	Focus on assessments, no efforts at enhancement of language

The following figure illustrates the conceptual framework for the challenges for Arabic students in English writing
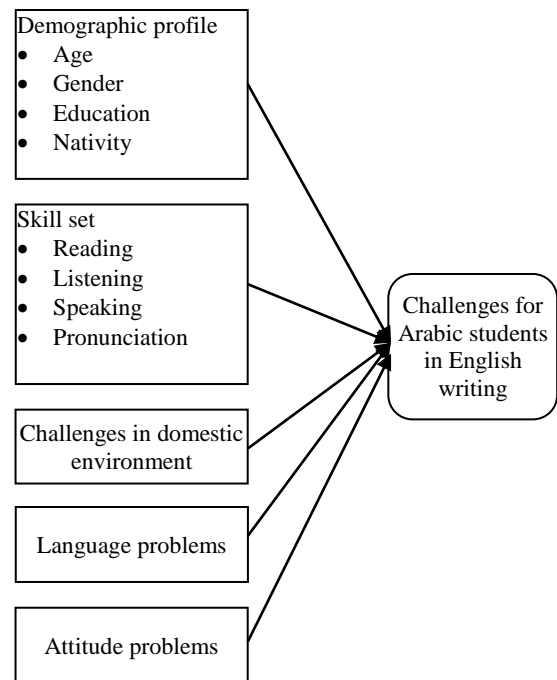

Figure: The conceptual framework for the challenges for Arabic students in English writing
Source: Author

Hypothesis:

- H1: Demographic profile is one the challenges for Arabic students in English writing
  - Age impacts on Arabic students in English writing
  - Gender impacts on Arabic students in English writing
  - Education impacts on Arabic students in English writing
  - Nativity impacts on Arabic students in English writing
- H2: Skill set is one the challenges for Arabic students in English writing
  - Reading impacts on Arabic students in English writing
  - Listening impacts on Arabic students in English writing

- ➢ Speaking impacts on Arabic students in English writing
- ➢ Pronunciation impacts on Arabic students in English writing
- H3: Domestic environment is one the challenges for Arabic students in English writing
- H4: Academic environment is one the challenges for Arabic students in English writing
- H5: Language problems is one the challenges for Arabic students in English writing
- H6: Attitude problems is one the challenges for Arabic students in English writing

3. METHODOLOGY

In this research the adopted tools and sampling techniques are (refer table 1) similar to a study that focuses upon the facts and true information rather than just opinions and assumptions:

Table 1: Research Methodology adopted

Paradigm:	*Positivism*
Design:	*Descriptive*
Approach:	*Quantitative*
Target:	*Oman, Muscat* based educational Institutions
Sampling:	*Simple Random* Sampling
Sample Unit:	*SCD (Scientific College of Design)*
Sample size:	*106*
Data collection:	*Survey* (Closed-End Questionnaire)
Tools:	*Instruments* - Cronbach Alpha, Karl Pearson (1-tailed) and ANOVA *Packages* - SPSS and Microsoft Excel

The paradigm in this research has been adopted as positivism (objective based reality significantly adopted by the researchers who seek quantitative researches) since the study is basically structured upon analysing the facts towards the English writing among the Omanis. Thus the study could be framed as a quantitative approach based research which could be classified into descriptive design/ plan since it describes the challenges, hindrances, issues, etc faced by the students of Middle East, Muscat to be precise, in writing English.

The samples from the finalized target had been deduced as 106 since the study aims the students for data analyses. Data has been decided to be as of both: primary based (Survey: non-optional/ Closed-end questionnaire) and secondary based (literary works: journals, articles, books, etc). Analyses will be carried out by adopting the statistical tools (ANOVA, Cronbach Alpha, Karl Pearson and Multiple Regression) towards attaining the outcomes/ results. Thus the methodological techniques would be adopted and employed here for the valid and reliable data accumulation and finally for interpreting the gathered data towards seeking conclusion for the challenges that prevails in English writing.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

Data from the participants were accumulated through the survey method (utilizing the questionnaire); where, the demographic profile consisted of name (optional), age, gender, university/ college, mother tongue and geographical location. All the demographic information was assessed against the challenges and it was interpreted that the variables (dependant and independent) are associated. The data processing in this research has been conducted by utilizing the statistical tools and along with manual formulae calculations. After categorizing the raw data, the analysis has been done in three parts: a) Demographic analysis (age, gender, mother-tongue, etc) by adopting the Karl Pearson technique; b) Descriptive analysis (factors preventing the participants from proper English writing: skill sets, domestic environment based challenges, attitude problems, academic challenges based challenges and level of challenges met through English writing) by adopting the Cronbach Alpha technique; ANOVA and multiple regression technique towards exploring the association between the dependant and independent variables. The analyses are as follows:

The Cronbach Alpha values are above 0.9 which is higher than the traditional cutoff score, i.e. >0.7 (Nunnally &Bernstein 1994). The AVE scores range from 0.805 and 0.974 this indicates satisfactory "convergent validity and unidimensionality".

Null hypothesis Ho: There is no significant relationship between the variables.

Alternate hypothesis H1: There is a significant relationship between the variables.

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.637[a]	.406	.343	.309	.406	6.483	10	95	.000	1.682

a. Predictors: (Constant), Monthertongue, AELMEAN, Age, Chafacew1, Gender, cdmean, Chafacew2, fpewmean, CAEMEAN, skpmean

b. Dependent Variable: LEWMEAN

The table 2 represents the Model Summary table. This table provides the R, R2, adjusted R2, and the standard error of the estimate, which can be used to determine how well a regression model fits the data. A value of 0.637, in this case, indicates a good level of prediction. It can be understood that, the value of 0.406 that independent variables explain 40.6% of the variability of dependent variable.

Table 3: ANOVA analysis ANOVAa

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	8	6.213	10	.621	6.483	.000[b]
	Residual	9.105	95	.096		
	Total	15.318	105			

a. Dependent Variable: LEWMEAN

b. Predictors: (Constant), Monthertongue, AELMEAN, Age, Chafacew1, Gender, cdmean, Chafacew2, fpewmean, CAEMEAN, skpmean

The F-ratio in the ANOVA table tests whether the overall regression model is a good fit for the data. The table 3 shows that the independent variables statistically significantly predict the dependent variable, $F(10, 95) = 6.483$, $p < .0005$ (i.e., the regression model is a good fit of the data)

Table 4: Coefficient table

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.514	.311		8.082	.000
	fpewmean	.007	.050	.014	.133	.894
	skpmean	.340	.080	.518	4.249	.000
	cdmean	.040	.044	.084	.923	.358
	CAEMEAN	-.018	.044	-.039	-.399	.691
	AELMEAN	.116	.069	.165	1.684	.095
	Chafacew1	-.044	.041	-.088	-1.074	.285
	Chafacew2	-.062	.041	-.127	-1.527	.130
	Age	-.058	.031	-.156	-1.878	.063
	Gender	.029	.062	.038	.475	.636
	Mother tongue	-.049	.065	-.062	-.763	.447

a. Dependent Variable: LEWMEAN

The general form of the equation to predict challenges encountered by Arabic students Level of English writing is of from Fpe,SKP, CD, AEL,Age,Gender,Mothertongue is :predicted scmp = .254 + (0.007 x fpe) +(0.340 x skp) + (0.40 x cd) - (.018 x cae)+(.116 x ael) - (.044 x cha1) - (.062 x cha2) - (.58 x age) + (.029 x gender) - (.049 x mothertongue) This is obtained from the Coefficients table

Un-standardized coefficients indicate how much the dependent variable varies with an independent variable when all other independent variables are held constant. Consider the effect of SP in this example. The un-standardized coefficient, B1, fpe equal to 0.007 (refer Coefficients table 4). This means that a small Increase in fpe, there is a decrease in challenges encountered by level of English writing by of 0.007.

A multiple regression was run to predict the challenges encountered by Arabian students in their level of English writing on .These variables statistically significantly predict , $F(10, 95) = 6.483$, $p < .0005$ (i.e., the regression model is a good fit of the data),R2 =.406.All the variables added statistically to the predictions, p<.05. So reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis .There is a significant relationship between the age, gender, mother tongue, skill set, challenges in domestic environment, challenges in academic environment, language problem and attitude problems on challenges encountered by Arabian students in their level of English writing.

5. DISCUSSION

The existing studies upon the English as Foreign Language (EFL) and also upon the English as Second Language (ESL) had been carried out by several researchers as mentioned earlier. Through the earlier studies and researches upon the challenges it has been identified that the hindrances could be in two forms: external factors (culture, environment, geography locations, etc) and internal factors (attitude, skills set, grasping capability, demography, etc). According to the understanding it has been derived/ narrowed that the Saudi people (people of varied nature: Socially active, Educational sector, Career based, etc) were more positive towards the English as language rather than the other places in Middle East. Through this research and exploring the pre-existing literature through reviews, the factors (internal and external) had been examined and according to the analyses and findings it has been found that, there is a strong relationship among the independent variables (demographic profile, skill sets, domestic environment based challenges, attitude issues and academic environment based challenges) and the dependent variable (Arabic students enhancing the level of their English writing through challenges). Thus it could be interpreted and inferred that the variables focused here has a positive relationship indicating the fact that the challenges exist between the students and their academy/ curriculum, environment, culture, geography, mother-tongue, capabilities, skill sets and attitudes.

6. CONCLUSION

Through the findings and the analyses of the data the study could be concluded by stating the obvious facts that, each independent variable is closely related to the dependent variable and challenges are from both internal factors and also the external factors. The objectives was to find the level of challenge the Arabic students face in English language as writing, through assessing themselves and their skill sets, via: attitude challenges (lack of interaction, self-satisfaction, lack of skill to understand the complexity, progression in improvising English as writing,); basic challenges (good paragraph writing, sentence structuring, flow in writing, identifying mistakes/ self assessing towards improvisations, lack of motivation, lack of knowledge and guidance from teachers, spellings and grammar: punctuations, vocabulary, etc; self practices and group practices in learning and writing and seeking assistance from English speaking natives); academic/ curriculum based challenges (lack of motivation from teachers, unqualified teachers, restricted learning environment, and depending on teachers too much); domestic environment based challenges (parental care in English writing and their education level, societal issues, family generation issues, and demography); and finally skill set based challenges (reading issues, listening issues, speaking issues and pronouncing issues). Through the analyses and findings it could be concluded that all the factors are related and significantly affects the students' ability in writing English, respectively.

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