



Difficulties of Writing Solid Paragraphs Facing EFL Students at Azawia University

Naema Alkhboli

English Department/Faculty of Arts/ University of Zawia
Zawia - Libya

EMAIL: n.Alkhboli@zu.edu.ly

Received: 20/07/2024 Accepted: 24/08/2024 Available online: 08/09/2024 DOI:

ABSTRACT

This research aims to study the difficulties faced by students learning English as a foreign language in developing well-written paragraphs in English. They usually transfer features of their mother tongue to the target language. For example, Al-Khatib (2001) indicated that students have a tendency to write long sentences with coordinating conjunctions, repetition and argumentation through presentation and explanation (Al-Samdani, 2010). They often talk about the topic and repeat phrases before stating the main points (Al-Mohammadi, 2013). The sample consisted of (102) students who indicated both types of errors and frequent errors that students made when studying the writing course in their first academic year. The data collected showed that students face many problems in writing a good topic as well as concluding sentences and supporting details by adding examples, reasons and using discourse markers appropriately.

Keywords /Writing, Coherent Paragraphs, English Language, University of Zawia .

صعوبات كتابة فقرات متماسكة تواجه طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في جامعة

الزاوية

نعيمة الخبولي

قسم اللغة الإنجليزية-كلية الآداب-جامعة الزاوية

الزاوية -ليبيا

EMAIL: n.Alkhboli@zu.edu.ly

تاريخ النشر: 2024/09/08م

تاريخ القبول: 2024/08/24م

تاريخ الاستلام: 2024/07/20م

ملخص البحث:

يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة الصعوبات التي يواجهها الطلاب الذين يتعلمون اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في تطوير فقرات مكتوبة بشكل جيد باللغة الإنجليزية، وهم عادة ينقلون ميزات لغتهم الأم إلى اللغة المستهدفة، على سبيل المثال، أشار الخطيب (2001) إلى أن الطلاب لديهم ميل لكتابة جمل طويلة مع أدوات الربط المنسقة، والتكرار والجدل من خلال العرض والشرح (الصمداني، 2010). وغالبا ما يتحدثون حول الموضوع ويكررون العبارات قبل ذكر النقاط الرئيسية (المحمدي، 2013) تكونت العينة من (102) طالبا أشاروا على حدٍ سواء إلى نوعي الأخطاء والأخطاء المتكررة التي وقع فيها الطلاب عند دراسة مقرر الكتابة في عامهم الدراسي الأول، وأوضحت البيانات التي تم جمعها أن الطلاب يواجهون الكثير من المشاكل في كتابة موضوع جيد بالإضافة إلى الجمل الختامية والتفاصيل الداعمة بالإضافة الأمثلة والأسباب واستخدام علامات الخطاب بشكل مناسب.

الكلمات المفتاحية / كتابة، فقرات متماسكة، اللغة الإنجليزية، جامعة الزاوية.

1. Introduction

1.1 Writing Challenges Facing Arabic Speakers

In general, writing is a challenging skill for native speakers and non-native speakers alike for the reason that writers must balance many issues in their writing for example content, organization, vocabulary and mechanics which means using the right capitalization, spelling and punctuation. Writing in a foreign language is more challenging because it is complicated and problematic process (Alsamadani, 2010) as writers are predictable to create written samples that are grammatically accurate, semantically acceptable and culturally suitable. Libyan students encounter many problems writing well- developed paragraphs in English. As English and Arabic linguistic systems differ, it is accepted that Arab learners of English face problems learning English as a foreign language (ibid., 2010).

According to Al-Khatib (2001) students typically transfer the features of Arabic as their first language. For instance, students have a tendency to write overly long sentences using multiple coordinating conjunctions. Almehmadi, (2012) also explained that Arabic students usually repeat ideas through explanations. Alsamadani, (2010) added that students usually circumference the main topic with lots of repetition.

According to Mohamed & Omar, (2000), the degree of obviousness and implicitness of the message forms another variation between English and Arabic styles. For example, Arab writers often avoid transferring their messages obviously, believing that readers are in charge for understanding the message. They as well tend to convey their first modes and patterns of thinking in their mother tongue.

Writing teachers do not emphasize content and organization of ideas, instead they emphasis grammar and punctuation which are their priority. Many students stated that they have learned the rules of English writing and grammar without learning ways to express their thoughts.

Generally, Arab students including Libyans encounter many difficulties developing well-written paragraphs in English in terms of content, organization, and preciseness in using acceptable grammatical patterns, fluency, punctuation and spelling. First and second semester students at Azawia University have studied English for at least eight years and some of them have achieved 85 or above grade in English at secondary school exams, which includes an English

composition. Though, they still have main problems in three areas of English composition: sentence structure, paragraph structure, content and organization as they convey their mother tongue style of writing. For instance, they have a tendency to write long sentences, repetition, use presentation and explanation for persuading the reader and use semantic and phonological parallelism.

Many studies regarding problems of Arab learners of English as a Foreign Language in writing have focused on word and sentence level following the structural approach of error and contrastive analysis. Other studies concentrated on the grammatical level as the extreme use of the definite article “the”, or deleting the copula, the verb to be. Though, this study not only focuses on developing paragraph in terms of topic sentence, a concluding one and supporting details that are typically expressed precisely in long clauses with excessive use of conjunctions such as “also”, “and”, “that” and “which”, but this study also focuses on the error sentence level. Consequently cohesiveness will be also addressed in this study.

1.2 Significance of the Study

It is significant to indicate that no studies have addressed definitely the writing of first and second semester students at Azawia University. Reviewing the literature regarding difficulties encounter students who learn English and comparing them with the participants of my study exhibit that they have similar types. Furthermore, I myself made the same errors and mistakes in my English learning journey as an Arabic speaker.

Theoretical Background

Many studies were done to examine errors made by Arabic-speaking EFL students in their writing in the last decades. Recently other studies indicate similar results regarding Arab EFL students’ serious difficulties in writing English that would forbid their ability to express their thoughts during writing. Ridha, (2012) pointed out that students frequently stem from their first language interference, (Al-Buainain, 2007), and are as well systematic and classifiable. These difficulties cover many areas such as semantics (Al-Shormani, 2010), grammar, morphology and spelling (Al-Buainain, 2007), and use of prepositions (Tahaineh, 2010).

Almehmadi, (2012) mentioned that Arab writers have a tendency to use overlong sentences, repetition, presentation and explanation. He explained that repetition is introduced by writing more synonyms in the same sentence. For example, to convey emphasis, the phrase (destruction and demolition) could be repeated twice in the same sentence. Furthermore, they use the coordinating conjunctions (and, as) extremely, which are equivalent to 'wa' and 'Fa' in Arabic. Al-Khatib (2001) analysed the writing samples of 77 Jordanian students that included 315 errors which could be related to 1st language interference. The participants also like better the use of coordination rather than subordination.

Al-Khatib (2001) also investigated students' personal letter writing in English and found that sentences of Arab students' are overlong. Previous studies exhibit similar results such as Koch's study (1983) that analysed English essays by Arabic-speaking English students and found that most of the participants made extensive use of devices such as repetition of the most important words and phrases. Koch conclusion was that certain qualities of Arabic speech are transferred, and this may affect Arabic speakers to repeat phrases or words in English.

Alsamadani, (2010) pointed out that presentation and expansion are qualities of argumentation in Arabic prose. Therefore, Arabic students do not introduce dissimilar standpoints in their arguments. Moreover, they frequently state the main ideas after talking indirectly around the topic and repeating phrases. Furthermore, Ibrahim & Nambiar (2011) found weakness in vocabulary and idea organization.

Likewise, Barry (2014) analysed the writing samples of Saudi students, attending a pre academic program at Oakland University. Data analysis included many types as use of English expressions, word order and use of conjunctions. Results revealed extreme use of conjunctions, especially "and".

Other studies disclosed difficulties in paragraph unity among Arab learners writing in English. For example, Khuwaileh and Al Shoumali (2000) analysed the writing of Jordanian students in Arabic, their mother tongue, and English as their second language. They stated that 45% of the students wrote compositions in their first language which lacked organization of ideas and without suitable linking of thoughts. Also, they reported similar results concerning the writing of Jordanian college students in terms of organization of thoughts. Moreover,

Ahmed (2010) reported similar difficulties in terms of sequencing thoughts and writing topic sentences when examined the writing of EFL Egyptian students.

On the other hand, Strauch (2005) guidelines include that writing in English needs writers to start the paragraph with a topic sentence and conclude it with a concluding one. The topic sentence clearly states what the entire paragraph is about. It provides an overview of the sentences to follow. Conclusions could be expressed in many types such as restating the topic sentence, summarizing the main points stated in the supporting details, relating idea that grows out of the body, and summarizing the several types of conclusions.

Examples and reasons are essential to support the topic sentence. Structural parallelism is often used in sentences to emphasize the similarity of thoughts. Parallel grammatical structures are used to connect a series of sentences expressing alike information.

Speech markers are used to connect between the thoughts in the written text displaying addition, examples, comparison and contrast, place, time, or direction, and they point to logical relationship (Transition Words and Phrases, 2015). They are necessary to have cohesive written paragraphs. Modhish (2012) conducted a study about using discourse markers showed that explaining speech markers followed by contrastive and causative are the most common ones. Consequently, “also”, “and”, “so” and “but” are the most common speech markers used in their writing samples.

2. Writing Instructions

Ansari, (2012) pointed out that teaching a second language is not an easy task, but it can be taught successfully with patience and hard work to identify the needs of the students and invent the right methodology to assist them. As a result, the writing teacher has to study the challenges encountered by his students in the process of learning English and to find the appropriate tasks.

Al-Buainain, (2007) pointed out that teaching in the classroom plays a significant role in dealing with errors. To help EFL students write well in English, it is recommended to use diverse techniques, approaches and methods. The teachers are responsible to adopt, adjust or even develop educative procedures and techniques that can reduce the students’ errors and raise their level. To improve students’ writing ability, students always should be stimulated to do remedial exercises. And h to help students understand the

errors that result from over generalization, brief grammar rules may be necessary (ibid., 2007).

Detailed instruction were assured by Hunt et al. (2009) as one of the reasons in effective teaching, which comprises the teacher's ability to clarify precisely what students are predictable to do and how they do their tasks successfully. Likewise, Hall, and Verplaetse (2000) argued that teachers can make classroom learning effective and playing an essential role in enhancing the talent of language students by acting as motivators, providers of precise language models and evaluators. Additionally, teaching is significant in language learning since only a teacher can identify the learners' needs and difficulties to help them learn a language that matches their needs (Corbett, 2003). As a result, teachers are predictable to use activities that assist language learning procedure.

2.1 Contrastive Analysis

Most Arab learners' errors are because of performance mistakes, first language interference, or false intra-language analogy (Housen and Pierrard, 2005). Therefore, contrastive analysis has been defined as an inductive investigative approach based on the distinctive elements in a language (Kardaleska, 2006)). Howatt & Widdowson (2004) pointed out that this analysis is employed in Applied Linguistics to comprehend the similarities and differences of sentence structures between languages. According to (Gass & Selinker, 2008) teachers employ contrastive analysis to comprehend the transfer and shift from a language to another and to compare the foreign language with the mother tongue to adopt methods and techniques to meet the students' needs. Contrasting both languages is important in teaching the foreign language because it benefits teachers in understanding the dissimilarity between the basic grammars of the two languages. Based on what has mentioned about contrastive analyses, teachers will be capable to expect errors or problems to take care of their students.

Transfer occurs in two forms: positive and negative. Positive transfer happens when the structure of two languages is alike; it outcomes in the precise construction of a language.

On the other hand, negative transfer, happens when students use incorrect structures into a new language, because of grammatical variances between L1 and the L2 that are not understood by the student. *A comparative study of*

Arabic dialect was conducted by Benmamoun, (2000) who clarified an example from the Arabic language can be used to comprehend the negative transfer is the copula omission.

Using contrastive analysis in teaching writing is essential to remind the students from time to time that they make mistakes because of the effect of their mother tongue. If the students are not reminded of this, they will return to the use of their mother tongue frequently, especially when they fail to recognize a particular grammatical rule or a specific word of the second language. They will comprehend that literal translation may not work in all cases. They might also comprehend that reality can be seen from numerous dissimilar views and that human minds formulate ideas in diverse and unique fashions. They will understand that their mother tongue works differently from the second language they are learning.

2.2 Error Analysis

Error analysis is a technique used for about all errors made by the second language students comprising those that outcome from the first language learning and others which are not related to the learners' native language. It should be clear here that error analysis is employed as a method to study learners' errors as it provides data from which deductions about the language learning process. It helps writing teachers and students as well. The former would assist them learn more about the difficulty of the writing process of their students, and the later will help the students be aware of their difficulties to overcome them consciously. Thus, they are different from mistakes which are haphazard deviations (Coker, 1981).

Dulay et al. (1982: 165) discussed four kinds of errors: inter-lingual, developmental, ambiguous and others errors. Developmental intra-lingual errors are "similar to those made by children learning a target language as their first language". The third type is ambiguous errors, that could be categorized either as developmental or inter lingual because they reflect the student's native language structure, and they are of the kind found in children's speech gaining their mother tongue. The last type of errors is classified as others. Dulay and Burt (1973) categorized such errors as "unique". Errors of this kind are items that do not fit under any other type. Also, they are unique to second language students.

Moreover, first language interference, overgeneralization and inadequate knowledge of the foreign language could be regarded as other causes for language errors that appear in the writing Arab learners of English (Ancker, 2000).

2.3 The Process Approach

It is recommended the process approach for teaching writing because the focus is on the process of writing itself, not on the product (Sun & Feng, 2009). So, writers should be trained to ask themselves continually how to write and how to start writing. They should be moreover trained to generate thoughts for writing, think of the reader, and write several drafts to present written products that express their own notions. Teachers who employ this approach usually give students time to develop thoughts and get feedback on the content of what they write in their copies of writing because writing becomes a procedure of discovery for them because they discover new thoughts and new language forms to express them. Implementing the process approach needs teachers to give students a great accountability for their own learning through making decisions about type and select of topics in addition to cooperating while writing. Students should be involved in pre-writing, planning, drafting, and post-writing activities throughout the writing process.

2.4 Free Writing

Another recommended approach in (Some Approaches to Writing, 2007) is the free-writing, which does not focuses on quality but it focuses on quantity. Teachers who use this approach assign a large amount of free writing about given topics and given only minimal correction stressing content and fluency rather than accuracy and form. Teachers would begin their classes by asking students to write freely on any topic without worrying about spelling and grammar for ten minutes, because when thoughts appear on the page, grammatical accuracy and organization follow. Teachers read these pieces of free writing and may comment on the thoughts the writer expressed, but they do not correct them. In return, some students may express their wish to read their own writing aloud to class.

To support the participants improve their writing, exposing them to authentic English by providing understandable input by watching the news in English, reading short articles from newspapers, debating their content and learning new vocabulary would be very beneficial.

3. The Writing Course

3.1 Describing the Book

The first writing book in their studies is provided to assist them develop a paragraph in English, which is contained a topic sentence, a conclusion and supporting details (reasons and examples) that are well expressed in cohesive paragraph. The book is called “Academic Writing”, which includes models of paragraphs in English and a diversity of exercises to assist the students to improve their paragraphs. The book includes many units, but the following two are covered in this course: Narrating a Personal Experience, Writing about a Person, Supplying Examples, Providing Reasons and Supporting with Parallel Points. Furthermore, the students of this course practice writing persuasive paragraphs nearly at the end of the academic year.

3.2 Requirements

In this writing book the students are expected to write ten paragraphs during the academic year. The procedure approach is employed as follows: the students are expected to write, revise, edit and submit the paragraph for three times before it is marked.

To extend the vocabulary stock of the students in order to express themselves in their written works, they are needed to read assigned articles from English newspapers and magazines. They are also expected to underline at least three new words that they have learned from the article. Moreover, the content is discussed in class and sometimes they use the new words in sentences.

One of the most employed strategies in this course is seating students in three to four groups to discuss the samples in the book, to compare students’ answers and to do some kind of class activities such as analysing mistakes, completing paragraphs or practicing free writing. To provide sufficient opportunities of writing, contrastive and error analysis are often used to help the students to be intentionally aware of their mistakes and difficulties in writing.

After reading the outline of the syllabus in the second half of the year, the students are asked to write a paragraph about their choice of studying English at University. After they complete writing the paragraph, they are asked to compare their sample with the one provided in the book. They are not able to specify the differences between the two samples. Then I start analysing the structure of the paragraph indicating that it has a topic sentence, supporting

details, and a conclusion and I keep reminding them of the significance of including a topic sentence and a concluding one. Presenting students' good topic sentences in class is employed to highlight their successes. Then explaining why the unsuitable samples are not suitable. Sometimes they are asked to sit in three groups and rewrite these sentences to meet the requirements of good topic sentence. Other times, I write incorrect sentences on the board making certain to involve the students by asking for a word to review these sentences.

Similarly, their mistakes are collected weekly, typed without their names and printed to be explained and corrected in class. They are given the opportunity to determine the source of the error and correct it. Though, the students show lack of enthusiasm many times as they are unable to specify the reason for making such mistake. In this case, I interfere directly by asking particular questions about this kind of mistakes. For example, the students are asked to underline the verb in the sentence? They are also asked to indicate the kind of clause in complex sentences. Indicating the kind of sentences, simple, compound or complex one, is another strategy that is used frequently. Also indicating the sorts and checking their examples, I work with them to change their long sentences following the structure of these kinds.

Students are encouraged to read the draft loudly before submitting it to feel the mistakes.

Sometimes, they are frequently seated in groups and are required to work together. At the end of the academic year, the students are asked to compare between their first drafts and the last one in terms of providing a topic sentence, examples and reasons and finally a conclusion. Moreover, students are expected to specify their level of progress in terms of well-connected sentences and using well-structured ones.

4. Methods

To help the students write better sentences and paragraphs in English, the process approach and the free writing approach were used. Also, different techniques were used including contrastive analysis and error analysis. Furthermore, exposing students to authentic English material by reading short articles from English magazines and newspapers was a crucial part of the instruction.

4.1. Participants

The participants are first year students in EFL Languages and Translation department at Azawia University. They are between 19 to 21 years old. They usually start their studies instantly after finishing secondary school. In fact, the majority of the participants have a limited experience in English writing due to the fact that writing is nearly neglected in Azawia secondary schools.

4.2. Data Analysis

Collecting and analysing the students' mistakes have been carried out weekly. The collected data were analysed for the paragraph level errors to address the three constituents of the paragraph: topic sentence, supporting details and concluding sentence. The sentence level errors comprised of the following subcategories: semantic, syntactic and stylistic. For instance, when the sentence lacks a verb, it falls under the syntactic sort. The error is considered semantic when the words are not used in the suitable context. Stylistic refers to the transfer from Arabic style to English style.

5. Results

5.1. Inappropriate Topic Sentences

- 1- I believe that watching movies benefits us with many sides of our lives.
- 2- Watching movies has a lot of positive benefits on our life and mind, that's not matter what movie's genre is drama, horror or tragedy.
- 3-I like seeing movies, Specially, English movies, because these movies are amazing.
- 4- We all agree that sometimes the government makes bad laws and policies.

5.2. Supporting Details

1. This course also gave me the chance to realize that my family is very important, it has helped me establish my own views and how close we are to each other, this has shaped my view that everyone should try to get along and understand each other.
2. It is unbelievable that we can learn, the things that people around the world face, their thinking ways and also about the other cultures their lifestyle when they are out of their country.

3. Another reason is that travelling for one semester to America is something entertainment and free, I enjoy meeting people from different cultures, and being their friends is so nice and the trip gives me the chance to try new things we don't have in our country.

4. For example, the school environment, to print, to cut and also the material.

5.3. Concluding Sentences

1. I think that there must be an instant solution to master this type of noise.

2. To sum up, I would like to emphasize the significance of watching movies and also of staying away of those that might mislead us.

3. I think that there is a need to issue some laws against these disturbing sources.

4. I know it is not possible to cancel the noise pollution, but I hope that we will do something to reduce it, in order to live in a peaceful environment.

6. Discussion

First year students usually find it difficult particularly at first to write a general statement that contains a topic and a comment as it is required in English. Instead, they convey the style of Arabic which is indirect, personal and emotional most of the time.

The four samples of the topic sentences indicate that the students are not completely familiar with the style of these sentences. Three of them are personalized. They begin with either "I" or "we". However, they are incapable to create general statements that contain a topic and a comment. The first part of the second sample meets the requirements of a good topic sentence. Still, the student felt the necessity to add another clause to explain the general statement. Likewise, providing a concluding sentence forms another difficulty for Arab students. The first and the third samples are near to the way a concluding sentence is expressed. Though, the students felt the need of personalizing the issue by adding "I think that". The rest of the sentences are transferred from the Arabic style and not only personalized. These samples of topic in addition to concluding sentences are retention of former ones that had been mentioned by Ahmed (2010) and Alsamadani, (2010) that Arab writers in English frequently write about the topic and repeat phrases before they stating the main ideas.

Likewise, the students convey the Arabic style while providing supporting details for the topic sentences. Although the students use cues to indicate

reasons and examples following the samples in the book, the first and the third sentences show that the students provide neither examples nor reasons to support their topic sentences. However, they write long and sometimes run-on sentences to demonstrate their points. Furthermore, they tend to write a series of sentences that neither follows the sentence structure nor the English punctuation system. Words like “that”, “and” and “which” are used excessively alongside commas. These results are in agreement with previous results reported by Koch (1983) and Derrick and Gmuca (1985). Also, it is repeated frequently as it is transferred from the first language style as mentioned by various authors such as Abi (2003), Mahmoud (2005) and Almeahmadi (2012). Additionally, in a paragraph of five to six sentences, the students feel the necessity to repeat their ideas more than once rather being brief and direct with the goal of either convincing the reader of their argument or highlighting the importance of their ideas. These results are similar to those reported by Al-Khatib (2001).

Another difficulty that Arab students face is using the three kinds of English sentences, simple, compound and complex for supporting details. In this sense, Al-Khatib (2001) and Almeahmadi, (2012) argument regarding the tendency to write long sentences with unsuitable use of coordinating conjunctions is relevant here. It also seems that writing coherent paragraphs by using transitional words such as “in contrast” to highlight differences “in addition” to add relevant information also seems to be a major challenge for Arab students. However, some learners continue to write long sentences that they do not follow the sentence nor paragraph structure in English by using “so”, “but”, “and” and “also” excessively. These results consistent with those reported by Modhish (2012) who stated that the most common discourse markers are the elaborative followed by inferential, contrastive and causative.

They have learned to include examples and reasons. So, they follow the models in the book of how to provide reasons and examples. Though, they are not skilled enough to continue a sentence in English correctly. It could be concluded that the writers’ arguments in these sentences are done through presentation and detail as it had been mentioned by (Derrick & Gmuca, 1985; Koch, 1983).

Moreover, the details were not clear enough. Analysis of supporting details sentences shows that the writers state things generally one the assumption that readers will understand them. The following phrases explain this point: first,

people can learn what they like or want to learn; second, things faced by people all over the world and third state my views.

It is not clear which subjects to be studied, which opinions are formed and in which context, and which things people encountered. These examples are consistent with Mohamed & Omar, (2000) argument regarding the degree of message clarity and implicitness among Arab writers which could be related to the differences between Arabic and English stylistics.

The last example lacks a verb. It seems natural for Arab students not to insert a verb into every sentence, because sentences in Arabic have two forms; one type contains a verb and the other does not. The other two dependent clauses are not followed by complete sentences to form complex sentences. Again, it does not seem strange to Arabic speakers to have such sentences because they transfer the structure of Arabic clauses into their English sentences (Al-Buainain, 2007).

This study was conducted on Azawia University students, who learn English as a foreign language. Their mistakes are similar to those mentioned by various researchers who studied problems facing Arab students who write in English in Arab countries. This similarity indicates the effect of the students' first language on their learning English as a foreign language.

This study is limited because it was conducted in Languages and Translation Department at Azawia University. In addition, another study should be conducted that includes topics from similar educational institutions in an attempt to compare the writings of Libyan students from different regions. The new study should look at the students' essays, with the aim of finding areas of first language interference. Moreover, conducting a broader study to include students from different Arab countries and comparing their writing to that of Libyan students would add to the literature in this field.

7. Implications for Teaching

The above examples reveal that assisting students at Azawia University to obtain the English language style to developing well-written paragraphs is not easy since they transmit the style of their first language. In addition, they lack the basic vocabulary to express their thoughts properly. To do this, students must be conscious from the beginning of the dissimilarities between writing paragraphs in Arabic and in English.

Contrastive analysis would help them consciously realize the differences to avoid making mistakes. Furthermore, providing comprehensible input by exposing them to authentic use of English employing by reading short newspapers articles, discussing their contents and analysing samples of good paragraphs will be very helpful. In addition, error analysis will also be very useful because they will be provided with opportunities to reflect on their mistakes and the reasons behind making these mistakes over time.

Writing teachers should continually and consciously remind students of the need to depersonalize their writing by trying to decrease using the pronouns “I” and “we”. Likewise, introducing transition words to unite the ideas coherently must also be done consciously and continually. Students should always be reminded to do this through practice in and out the classroom.

Similar techniques are used to help the students provide suitable concluding sentences following the five kinds of conclusions which have been mentioned previously. When the students are reminded repeatedly to compare their concluding sentences and the models in the book, they will be encouraged to work with a classmate to improve these concluding sentences.

Furthermore, adopting a writing process approach would be very beneficial because the students will be given multiple opportunities to work on their drafts through the seven recommended stages from choosing a topic to sharing their writing with others.

In addition, writing teachers must realize that the process of helping Azawia University students develop good paragraphs in English is long and demanding process. Identifying the problems that students in Azawia University have and the reasons behind them would help the writing teachers better understand the errors and find beneficial ways to cope with them.

In conclusion, First year Azawia University students in EFL writing classes must be given plenty of opportunities to practice inside and outside the classroom so that they become familiar with the English language style of writing essays properly using the correct expressions, uniting their thoughts coherently along with consideration for the audience. Furthermore, adopting techniques such as contrastive and error analysis, various methods such as the free writing techniques would help these students overcome their difficulties in writing and start producing better writing samples.

References

- Abi S, N. (2003). An Analysis of Errors in Arabic Speakers English writings, 1-48.
- Ahmed, H. (2010). Students Problems with Cohesion and coherence in EFL Essay Writing in Egypt: Different perspectives. *Literacy Information and Computer Education Journal (LICEJ)*, 1, 211-221.
- Al-Buainain, H. (2007) Researching Types and Causes of Errors in Arabic Speakers' Writing. In M. Sadiq, A. Jendli, & A. Sellami (Eds.), *Research in ELT context* (195-224), Dubai: UAE.
- Al-Khatib, M. (2001). The Pragmatics of Letter Writing. *World English*, 20(2): 179-200.
- Almehmadi, M. M. (2012). A Contrastive Rhetorical Analysis of Factual Texts in English and Arabic. *Frontiers of Language and Teaching*, 3, 68-76.
- Alsamadani, H. A. (2010). The Relationship between Saudi EFL Students' Writing Competence, L1 Writing Proficiency, and Self-regulation. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 16(1): 53-63.
- Al-Shormani, M. (2010). Semantic errors committed by Arab learners of English: Classifications and L1 and L2 sources. CALTS, University of Hyderabad, India.
- Ancker, W. (2000). Errors and Corrective Feedback: Updated Theory and Classroom Practice. *English Teaching Forum*, 38(4): 20-25.
- Ansari, A. A. (2012). Teaching of English to Arab students: Problems and remedies. *Educational Research*, 3(6): 519-524.
- Barry, D. (2014). *The impact of native Arabic on English writing as a second language*. Oakland University in Michigan.
- Benmamoun, E. (2000). *The feature structure of functional categories: A comparative study of Arabic dialect*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Coder, S. P. (1981). *Error analysis and interlanguage*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Corbett, J. (2003). *An intercultural approach to English language teaching*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Derrick-Mscua, M., & Gmuca, J. (1985). Concepts of unity and sentence structure in Arabic, Spanish and Malay. A paper presented at the annual meeting of the conference on college compositions and community. Minneapolis, MN, March 21-23.
- Dulay, H., & Burt, M. (1973) Should we teach Children syntax? *Language Learning*, 23, 245-258.
- Dulay, H., Burt, M., & Krashen, S. (1982) *Two Languages*. Oxford: Oxford University press.
- Gass, S. M., & Selinker, L. (2008) *Second language acquisition: an introductory course*. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Hall, J. K., & Verplaetse, L. S. (2000) *Second and foreign language learning through classroom interaction*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Housen, A., & Pierrard, M. (2005) *Investigations in instructed second language acquisition*. Berlin, Germany: Mouton De Gruyter.
- Howatt, A. & Widdowson, H. (2004) *A history of English language teaching* (2nd ed.). London, England: Oxford University Press.
- Hunt, G. H., Hunt, G., & Touzel, T. J. (2009) *Effective teaching: Preparation and implementation*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Ibrahim, N., & Nambiar, R. (2011) What is the problem with the statement of problem? The case of postgraduate international students and the introductory sections of a project paper. *Procedia Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 15, 1713-1717.
- Kardaleska, L. (2006). Contrastive Analysis and Error Analysis in Copmbination with Analysis of the Semantic Level.
- Khuwaileh, A. A., & Shoumali, A. (2000) Writing errors: A study of the writing ability of Arab learners of academic English and Arabic at university. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 13, 174-183.
- Koch, B. J. (1983) Presentation as proof: The language of Arabic rhetoric. *Anthropological Linguistics*, 25(1): 47-60.
- Mahmoud, A. (2005) Collection errors made by Arab learners of English. *Asian EFL Journal*, 6(2): 116-126.
- Modhish, A. S. (2012) Use of discourse markers in the composition writings of Arab EFL learners. *English Language Teaching*, 5(5): 56-61.
- Mohamed, A., & Omer, M. (2000) Texture and culture: Cohesion as a marker of Rhetorical organization in Arabic and English narrative texts. *RELC Journal*, 31(2): 45-75.
- Ridha, N. (2012) The effect of EFL learners' mother tongue on their writings in English: An Error Analysis Study. *Journal of the College of Arts*, 60, 22-44.
- Some Approaches to Writing (2007) Derived from <http://www.udveksling.com>
- Strauch, A. O. (2005) *Writers at work: The short composition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sun, Ch., & Feng, G. (2009) Process approach to teaching writing applied in different teaching models. *English Language Teaching*, 2(1): 150-155.
- Tahaineh, Y. (2010) Arab EFL university students' errors in the use of prepositions. Retrieved from Language in India www.languageinindia.com
- Transition Words and phrases. (2015). Retrieved from <http://www.studygs.net/wrtst66.htm>