

## Students' Attitudes and Perceptions towards writing in English, Challenges facing EFL Learners, Case of study: forth year students, Faculty Of education, Sabha university

Hamed Awedat Massuod Alahrash

*Me, a lecturer, Head of department of English, Faculty of Arts & Science, Mizdah.*

Article Received: 25 February 2018

Article Accepted: 29 May 2018

Article Published: 18 July 2018

### ABSTRACT

The rationales beyond the current research were to examine English second Language students' attitudes and perceptions towards the academic writing. Secondly, to find out the obstacles which face forth year students when writing in English. This research was also conducted to find out the problems which face forth year students when performing the daily tasks. In other words, to investigate how students perceive the writing skill. This study used a descriptive method. This study comprised two qualitative data gathering; the current research implemented the interview and a questionnaire. According to the sampling, four teachers of written expression module were chosen to answer the interview. However 30 forth year students were chosen randomly to fill in the questionnaire. Finally, based on the analysis of the teachers' interview and the students' questionnaire, the results and findings of the research revealed that students have negative attitudes towards writing which affect their level of educational achievement. The collected data was discussed and findings were shown in the graphs enclosed within this study. As a result of this research some recommendations were laid that may help the students to overcome the current problems.

Keywords: Students Attitude, Teaching Methods, ESL Writing, Academic writing.

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

ESLs requested to master the four language skills, writing is one of the most important language skill and the most sophisticated one, as it obeys rules and instructions. This is really true considering the efforts learners make to enhance their writing, and make words convey their thoughts in an understandable way. Despite the important role of writing in learning and communicating, both native and nonnative students argue that it is very difficult to master. The ability to write accurately and effectively is a problem that evades many students. Students at the university level are required to write different types of assignments and fill up a lot of applications during their study at the university. In many countries, including Arab countries, educational systems emphasize writing for tests. For the students, they write only in order to pass examinations and to get good grades. Their attitudes towards the written tasks are artificial with no real sense purpose. There has been a great deal of discussion about how attitudes affect the achievement level of students. A positive relationship has been confirmed between positive attitudes and good writing level. When reviewing the literature, previous studies have concluded that better writers have more positive attitudes and less apprehension.

The current, therefore, tending at finding out forth year ESL students' attitudes towards the written tasks. Obviously, most of English language students, in the department of languages at faculty of education, Sabaha University, possess a weak performance in the writing skill. Due to the complexity of this skill, learners find it difficult to master all aspects of writing. Although forth year students have dealt with written Expression module for a relatively long period, they still produce erroneous patterns. The researcher believes that students need to be provided with more efficient writing strategies to overcome the difficulties they face when writing in English.

### **1.1 Objectives of the research**

The current study deals with the learners' poor achievement in written tasks with the purpose of identifying some factors which restrict the learners' ability to write correctly at the fourth year. The research objective is:

1. To identify some factors which noticeably restrict the learners' ability to write correctly.
2. To find out students' attitudes towards written tasks.
3. To help the students to overcome the difficulties by transcribing the research findings into suggestions and guidance.

This study focuses on the challenges encountered by fourth year students in order to identify the suggestions and solutions for the recommended future researches. This study is a crucial issue to be dealt with as it reveals the problems that students face when writing especially the lack of methods and the ways of teaching academic writing.

### **1.2 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES:**

Researcher hypothesizes that:

1. Students' attitudes impact their level of writing achievement.
2. Positive attitudes lead to positive educational outcomes.

## **2.0 LITREATURE SURVEY**

### **2.1 ACADEMIC WRITING**

Writing is considered as the most problematic skill, when it comes to teaching a second or foreign language. It is agreed that the writing skill is difficult even for native students because it requires many processes and steps to be mastered. There are a lot of definitions for writing. In its broad sense, it means "not only putting one's thoughts to paper as they occur, but actually using writing to create new knowledge" (Weigle 2002, p.p. 32-33). It is "encoding internal representation into written text". Writing is clearly much more than the production of graphic symbols, just as speech is more than the production of sounds. The symbols have to be arranged, according to certain conventions, to form words, and words have to be arranged to form sentences. This implies that the graphic symbols have to be combined according to special rules to form words, words to form sentences, and sentences to form paragraphs, Byrne (1993, p.1). Another definition is given by Byrne (1993, p.24) who believes that writing is a primary means of recording speech, even though it must be acknowledged as secondary medium of communication. Writing is one of the major skills for using language, through which one can convey his thoughts. It is stated that "writing is a reflection of what can occur only after the main ideas are in place." (Clark, 2003: 8). This means that the writer's goal is to know how to say what has been discovered, not in discovering and selecting what to say. Flower (1989, p.54) states that writing is a process that can be influenced by some elements in the learning activities. He says that: Writing is a social act that can only occur within a specific situation. It is therefore influenced both by the personal attitudes and social experiences that the writer brings to writing and the impacts of the particular political and institutional context in which it interviews, analyses of surrounding practices and other techniques, researchers seek to develop more complete accounts to local writing contexts. Hyland (2003,

p.3) defines it as “marks on a page or a screen, a coherent arrangement of words, clauses, and sentences, structured according to a system of rules”. Likewise, writing is seen as a graphic system used for communication as defined in Crystal (1995, p.257):” Most obviously writing is a way of communication which uses a system of visual marks made on some kind of surface. It is one kind of graphic expression”.

“Writing” is a term which usually used as a synonym to the term “composing”. Accordingly, Flower and Hayes (1981, p.366) stated that: “Writing is best understood as a set of distinctive thinking processes which writers orchestrate or organize during the act of composing”. According to Neman (1995) writing is defined as “a craft, an artistic process with techniques and conventions that can be learned, employing skills that can be improved.”(p.4). From another view, Zamel (1992) describes writing as a meaning-making, purposeful, evolving, recursive, dialogic, tentative, fluid, exploratory process. According to Zamel; writing is the combination of various cognitive operations which is consciously produced, revised, adapted and corrected. Many researchers agreed on the social nature of the writing skill. In addition to that, the writer has to keep in mind: content, organization, grammar, syntax, mechanics, word choice, audience, purpose and the writing process. The combination of all these components makes writing a difficult skill. Writing is a very complex skill that demands both physical and mental activity from the part of the writer. Many cognitive psychologists have described it as the most complex demanding of all cognitive activities undertaken by human beings. To sum up, Byrne 1979 states that writing is the transformation of our thoughts into language. Writing is a creative process of transmitting and communicating ideas that demands many factors in order to be successfully accomplished.

## 2.2 FUNDAMENTS OF EFFECTIVE WRITING

Writing is the basic skill in language learning. An increased level of effectiveness can be reached through understanding the nature of the writing skill. According to Starkey (2004), a good and effective piece of writing should include:

- **Organization**

Throughout the writing process, your ideas have to be regular, predictable and organized. In this context, the use of the prewriting technique helps in planning your work effectively. The writer thinks about organizing his/her written work before start writing down it. Starkey (2004, p.2) states: By following an organized method of writing, you will guide your reader from your first to last sentence. He or she will be able to see how the various points you make in your piece of writing work together and how they support your thesis.

- **Clarity**

An essential characteristic of writing is clarity. Some scholars like Murray and Hughes (2008) emphasize the role of clarity in making a piece of writing easy to read. They believe that the use of short sentences is the best solution for clear writing. According to Starkey (2004, pp.9-12), the learner should follow the next steps in order to achieve clarity: first Eliminate ambiguity: here the writer should focus on the use of simple words and not those with more than one interpretation. Second Use powerful, precise adjectives and adverbs: the use of modifiers in a correct way can help in accomplishing clarity. Finally, Be concise by avoiding wordiness and repetition. He provides us with

two reasons in order to avoid repetition: The first is that unnecessary repetition is a sign of sloppy writing. It is easy to say the same thing a number of times, varying it slightly each time. It is harder to say something well once, and continue writing about your next idea or example. Second, wordiness wastes valuable time and space. “If you are writing while the clock is ticking, or are limited to a number of words or pages, say it right the first time and move on”.(Starkey, 2004, p.17).

- **Coherence**

In academic writing, success and failure depend on how coherent is that piece of writing. According to Murray and Hughes (2008, p.45), to be coherent means that you stick your ideas as a chain, if any link is missing, the connections become unclear.

### **2.3 THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN THE WRITING PROCESS**

The role of the teacher in the writing process moves from being a source of authority to a facilitator which his aim is to help students produce well-structured pieces of writing. Harmer (2004, pp. 41-42) identifies five (05) roles of teachers in the writing tasks:

- **Demonstrating**

The teacher should show students how to write better and to make them aware of punctuation, spelling, capitalization, grammar and other conventions which will help them to know the language rules and to be good writers.

- **Motivating**

The teacher’s role when students feel lost in the writing task is to motivate them to feel more comfortable. The teacher should provide students with guidelines of how to start the writing process, how to relate ideas and motivate them to kill their fears.

- **Supporting**

Another role for the teacher is supporting. When doing their classroom tasks, teachers should support their students by giving them ideas and make them involve in the activities through encouragement.

- **Responding**

Responding means the teacher’s reaction towards students’ writing. It is done by giving comments on their errors and makes some suggestions to improve them.

- **Evaluating**

A better way to determine whether students have benefited from the tasks provided by their teacher is evaluation. In tests, the teacher evaluates the student’s mistakes and grades them to improve his/her writing ability.

### **2.4 WRITING AND OTHER SKILLS**

Learning a second language (SL) needs mastering every single aspect of it. Writing is considered as the most important skill which goes through different stages and involves different aspects. During the learning process, students should not learn the writing skill separately; it is not isolated from the other skills. There are two types of

skills: listening and reading represent the receptive skills, and speaking and writing represent the productive skills. Each skill should work hand in hand with the other skills in order to improve their development.

## **2.5 APPROACHES OF TEACHING WRITING**

“Good writers are those who keep the language efficient. That is to say, keep it accurate, keep it clear” (Ezra Pound). To be a good writer is not something innate or born with; rather, it is learned through practice usually in formal settings. Effectively, teaching formal writing is based on a number of theories and approaches.

### **2.5.1 The Product Approach**

This approach is also known as the “text-focused approach”. It focuses on the Behaviorist theory (imitation) in order to produce a well organized piece of writing. Nunan (1989) states that:

The product approach to writing focuses on the end result of the act of composition, i.e. the letter, essay, story and so on. The writing teacher who subscribes to the product approach will be concerned to see that the end product is readable, grammatically correct and obeys discourse conventions relating to main points, supporting details and so on.

In the product approach, students are given some model texts and they are supposed to produce a similar one through imitation. In this context, Nunan (1991) argued that imitation could be possible within the sentence level not the discourse level. Pincas states that: “The learner is not allowed to “create” in the target language at al... The use of language is the manipulation of fixed patterns ... these patterns are learned by imitation; and ... not until they have been learned can originality occur”. Pincas (1962, pp.185-186).

In this approach, grammatical and lexical errors were simultaneously corrected while the stages of the writing process were neglected. According to White (1998, p.46), the product approach is:

Study the model Manipulate elements Produce a parallel text This approach is “consistent with sentence level structuralism linguistics and bottom-up processing.” Nunan (1999, p. 272). The analysis of the written product is more likely to take place after the writing process in order to help the teacher to figure out the weaknesses and strengths of his/her students.

### **2.5.2 The Process Approach**

The process approach was a reaction to the product approach. It emphasizes the process of writing rather than the final product. In this approach, students are given enough time to write passing through four main stages: pre-writing, drafting, revising and editing. White and Arndt described the stages of the writing process in the figure below:

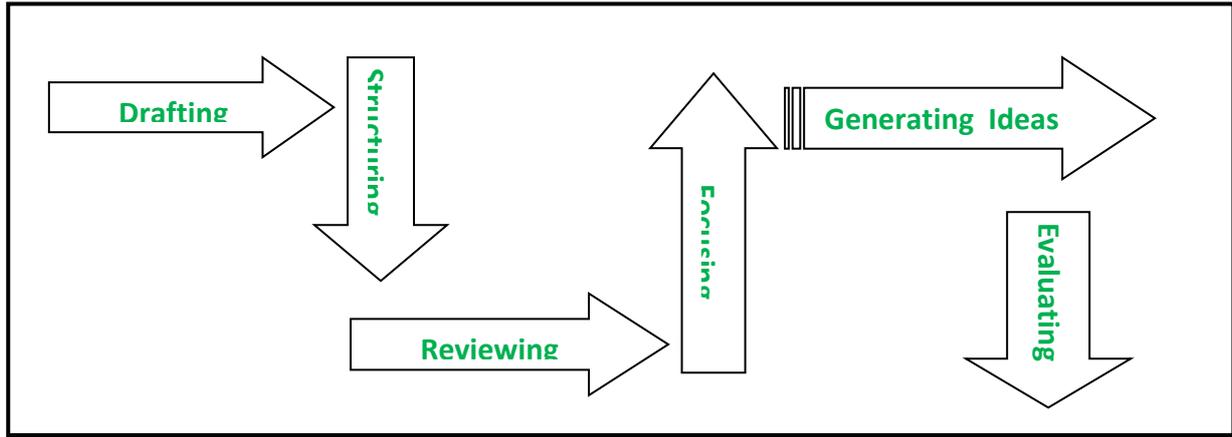
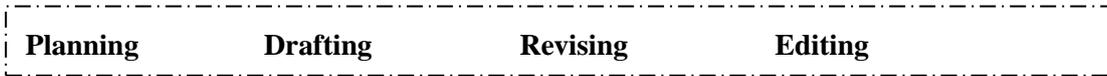


Figure 1.2. White and Arndt’s Process Writing Model

○ **Stages of the Writing Process**

The writing process is referred to as a linear sequence of a very related stages. Clark (2003) stated that the writing process is made up of related stages referred to as planning, drafting, revising and editing. Since they overlap, the success of a stage is determined by the success of the previous stage. In the same context, Clark argued that the process approach was based on the idea that writing is a reflection of what has already been formulated in the mind of the writer. From this, we infer that the more students go through these stages, the more they produce a good piece of writing.



▪ **Planning**

Planning is the first step to start with; it is supposed to be general and simple. Lipson (2005) believed that it is not necessary to draw a plan, what important is to have a plan in your mind. He added that this plan is not a final version; the writer may modify it either by adding some new ideas or by deleting others. Students need to be clear about the message, about the purpose as well as the audience. After writers have generated ideas about the topic, they start to focus on developing a plan for the piece they are going to write.

▪ **Drafting**

At the drafting stage, students start writing down their ideas on a paper focusing only on the content not on the form. Actually, they do not need to be careful about spelling or word choice; rather, they need to convey only the intended message. At this stage, ideas are clearer and more understandable if they are written on a paper. Gallo suggested that the writer can put down notes in order to come back and make modifications.

▪ **Revising**

“Good writers tend to concentrate on getting the content right first and leave details like correcting spelling, punctuation and grammar until later” Hedge (1988, p.23). The good way for evaluating ones writing is through revising. During the revising stage, the writer reread his/her work, checks clarity and cohesion, and take into consideration any proposed feedbacks in order to see whether his/her writing needs modifications or not.

## ▪ **Editing**

The last stage of the process approach to writing is editing. It refers to the correction of grammatical, lexical, and mechanical errors before publishing the final product. In this stage, various strategies may be used by students to correct their errors. They can, for example, work in pairs, group, use textbooks or dictionaries ... etc. Hedge puts forward the view that: "Good writers tend to concentrate on getting the content right first and leave the details like correcting spelling, punctuation, and grammar until later. (1988, p.23).

### ***2.6 Students' Attitudes towards Writing***

Writing is often a challenging subject for students. To help students develop their writing skills, teachers employ a variety of techniques for students to learn and use when writing. However, teachers must delve further to understand and learn about their students' attitudes towards writing. This should be done because attitude is an important factor that plays a large part in students' literacy learning. Attitude affects motivation to learn and write and influences how students approach the task of writing. Attitudes are based on self-efficacy beliefs, and that is important to understand as well. Negative attitudes can make writing even more challenging. Therefore, understanding attitude and its effect on the development of successful writers is important for guiding writing instruction. If teachers learn about and understand students' attitudes towards writing, this knowledge can impact their instructional practices positively. It is for these reasons that I wanted to investigate students' attitudes towards writing and the affect attitude has on their writing progress. This chapter provides an in-depth study of attitudes, how they are formed, their main types and models, and the functions they serve.

#### ***2.6.1 Attitude Theory***

The perception of attitude is essential to social psychology. Early psychologists have defined social psychology as the scientific study of attitudes. The first definitions were too broad, for example, Allport (1935) defined an attitude as "a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive and dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related" (p.810).

Allport (1967) notes the difficulty in constructing a definition sufficiently broad to cover the many kinds of attitudinal determination which psychologists today recognize while, and at the same time, narrow enough to exclude those types of determination which are not ordinarily referred to as attitudes. Decades after, the notion of attitudes lost its breadth.

Daryl Bem said that "attitudes are likes and dislikes" (1970, p.14). In a similar way, Eagly and Chaiken (1993) defined attitudes as "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor" (p.1). Triandis defined attitude as "an idea charged with emotion which predisposes a class of actions to a particular class of social situations" (1971, p.2). A number of definitions are available for the concept of attitude in the literature. Baker (1992, p.1) states that: "The notion of attitudes has a place in psychology, sociology,

anthropology, education, history, human geography and creative arts”. The role of attitudes in our language and thoughts is very important; it is an indelible part of it.

### **2.6.2 Aspects of Attitudes**

Attitudes have two main aspects. The first is that attitudes are not behaviours that people do; rather, they are predispositions to respond to a given object in a specific manner. They are tendencies to act towards or against a given circumstances as in the definition stated by Jung (1971, p.687) “an attitude is a readiness of the psyche to act or react in a certain way” (cited in Oskamp & Schultz 2005). The second aspect is the driving force of attitudes. Attitudes are not just a result of past experiences, they, as stated by Allport (1935), exerting a directive or dynamic influence. Directive means that attitudes guide the behavior and encourage actions, and dynamic means that they drive the behavior. The evaluation aspect of attitudes, which is the disposition to respond in a favourable or unfavourable manner to given objects, has been increasingly stressed by recent research. For instant, Olson & Maio define attitudes as “tendencies to evaluate objects favourably or unfavourably”(2003, p.299). To summarize we can say that in general “Attitude” is a hypothetical construct that represents an individual's like or dislike for an item. They are positive, negative or neutral views of an attitude object. People can also simultaneously hold a positive and a negative bias towards the attitude in question. All attitudes take a stance - positive or negative – but they can vary in intensity.

### **2.6.3 Types of Attitudes**

“In a broad sense, the study of attitudes is important because attitudes are important for our social lives” Hewestone and Strobe (p.240). Social psychologists have emphasized the importance of attitudes because they play a major role in our social lives. It is worthy to know the distinction that social psychologists have made between implicit, explicit attitudes and cognitive dissonance.

#### **2.6.3.1 Explicit Attitudes**

An attitude operating in a controlled processing about which are aware of its existence, its cognitive underpinning, and how it relates to behavior. Bordens and Horowitz (p.181). Obviously, people seem to be convinced by the justifications of their existence and they feel in harmony with their attitudes. Explicit attitudes are formed at the conscious level and they are easy for self-report. Explicit attitudes operate on a conscious level, so we are aware of them—aware of the cognitive underpinnings of them—and are conscious of how they relate to behavior. They operate via controlled processing and take some cognitive effort to activate. For example, you may know how you feel toward a given political candidate and match your behavior to that attitude. It is these explicit attitudes that we often find having a directive effect on behavior.

#### **2.6.3.2 Implicit Attitudes**

An implicit attitude is defined as “an individual’s automatic evaluative response to a target, which can occur without awareness. An implicit attitude is a spontaneous, immediate, good-bad response to the target that cannot be

consciously controlled. It reflects how the individual evaluates the target at a subconscious level” (Breckler, Olson and Wiggins 2006, p.202). This implies that implicit attitudes refer to the target objects and not the individual’s suspicion. Although implicit and explicit attitudes seem different, they cooperate together as one entity. Breckler et al. assert that the distinction between implicit and explicit attitudes will not always be important, inconsistency between the types of attitudes leads to what is called cognitive dissonance.

### **2.7 Cognitive Dissonance**

According to Fischer, Frei, Peus and Kastenmuler (2008, p.189) cognitive dissonance define as “the subjective perception of incomparability between two self-related cognitions”. This type was termed dissonance by Leon Festinger. He states that: “First, I will replace the word ‘inconsistency’ with a term which has less of a logical connotation, namely, dissonance” (1957, p.2). After that, he provides an explanation of his understanding of cognition: “by cognition... I mean any knowledge, opinion, or belief about the environment, about oneself, about one’s behavior” (1957, p.3). According to Festinger, cognitive dissonance can be considered as a condition that leads to activity toward dissonance reduction.

## **3.0 METHODOLOGY FRAMEWORK**

### **▪ Respondents**

In consideration of the reliability and validity, the sample under this study have been taken a set of 30 fourth year students at Faculty of education, Brack, Sabha university. Therefore we have chosen them randomly to make sure that the results can be generalized to represent all the fourth year students, this is because they have been studying English for a long period of time and Written Expression module during the three years also they are, thus, supposed to be able to write a composition.

### **▪ The Sample**

A random sampling was followed to select the respondents in order to conduct this study. Through this method, each member of the population (4th year students) has equal chance to be selected. The size of the sample used was 30 fourth year of department of English students at faculty of education, Brack.

### **▪ Data collection**

### **▪ Research Instruments**

In order to examine the students’ ability towards writing as well as thier attitudes toward the writing tasks in ESL classrooms, a questionnaire has been designed in order to investigate the students' views and attitudes towards their writing difficulties. In addition to a teachers’ interview which will help us determine their role in motivating and improving their students’ attitudes. The interview was developed to four (04) teachers of Written Expression module in Sabaha University. The purpose was to find more information that could help us determine students’ attitudes towards writing and their level in the written tasks in addition to the difficulties they are facing while composing.

### **▪ Students’ Questionnaire**

#### **Description of the Questionnaire**

A fourteen item questionnaire was developed to explore the major aspects being investigating. The questionnaire consists of closed questions and open-ended questions. In closed questions, the student had to tick his/her option (s) while in open-ended questions; the student should explain why he/she prefer one option than the other.

#### ▪ **Teachers' Interview**

##### **Description of the Interview:**

The interview that was designed for teachers included seven (07) questions (see Appendix 2). The questions were labeled in match with the questions of the students 'questionnaire. We used open-ended questions in order to make the teachers feel free to express their views.

#### ▪ **Data Analysis**

Data that obtained through the questionnaire have been analyzed by using SPSS as well as the interview was analyzed descriptively all the collected data are presented and analyzed.

## **4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Data was gathered through the questionnaire and interview were analyzed. In this chapter the researcher exposed the questions of the questionnaire then were analyzed one by one as below:

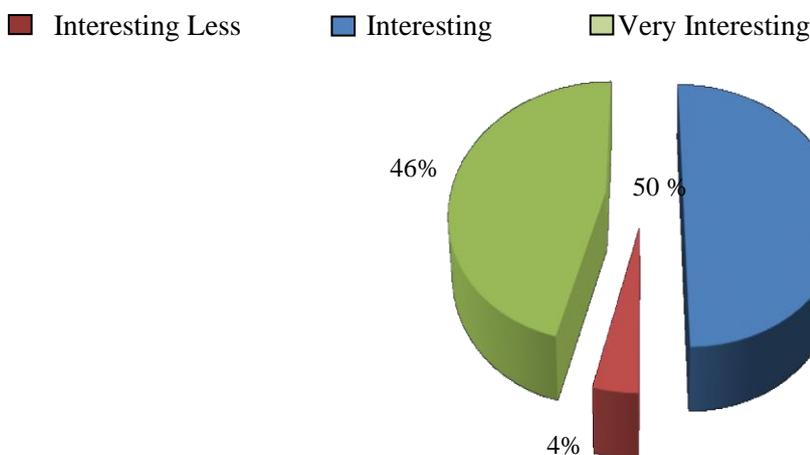
#### ▪ **Results of the Questionnaire**

The questionnaire fundamentally aims of testing the hypotheses we have formulated in the first chapter. Through the results of the questionnaire, we are going to make sure whether our hypotheses are confirmed or not.

##### **Question One**

In your opinion, the content provided in written expression module is:

- a-** Interesting
- b-** Less Interesting
- c-** Very Interesting



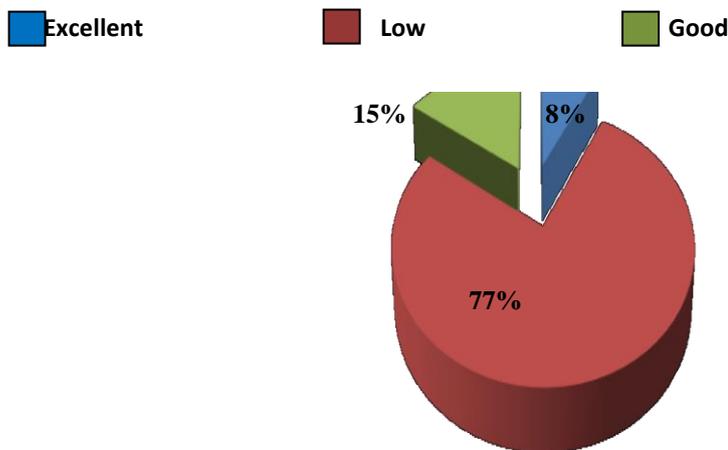
Graph 4.1: Students' Attitudes towards Writing

As shown in table 3.1, 50 % of the students believe that written expression module is interesting, 46,15 % argue that it is very interesting module, whereas only 3,85 % said that it is less interesting. This implies that students are aware of the importance of written expression module.

### Question Two

How do you evaluate your level in Writing?

- a- Excellent
- b- Good
- c- Low



Graph 4.2: Students' Evaluation of their Level in Writing

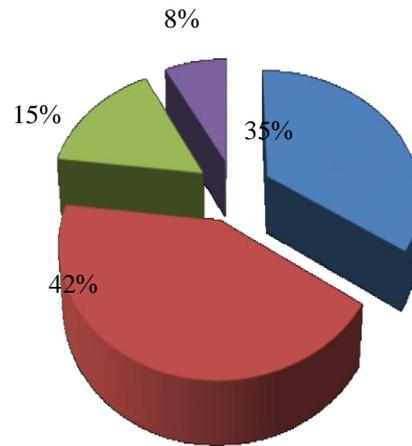
Table 3.2 reveals that the great majority, 76,93 % of the students evaluated their level in writing as “low”, 7,69 % as “excellent” while 15,38 % of them think that they have a “good” level. This means that they are not sufficiently satisfied with their level in writing.

### Question Three

Rank the following skills in terms of difficulty according to you:

- a- Listening
- b- Reading
- c- Speaking
- d- Writing





Graph 4.3: Priorities given to Skills

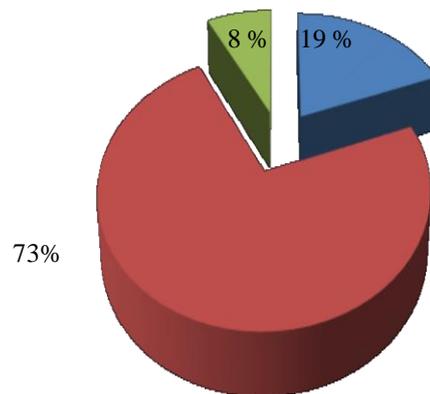
If we classify the findings according to the priorities, the students classified the difficulty of the four skills as follows: Speaking 11 times (42,31%), then Writing 9 times (34,62 %), then Reading 4 times (15,38 %), and finally Listening 2 times (7,69 %).

#### Question Four

How do you find the writing tasks?

- a- Difficult
- b- Medium
- c- Easy

■ Difficult     
 ■ Medium     
 ■ Easy



Graph 3.4: How Students View the Writing Tasks

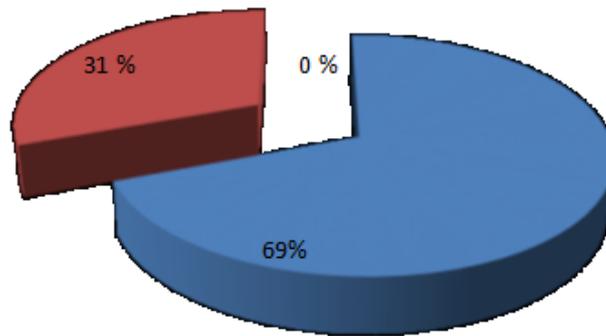
Graph 3.4 shows that 73,08 % of the students find that the writing tasks are “medium”, and 7,69 % of them find that the tasks are “easy”. The rest of the students, 19,29 %, claimed that the writing tasks are “difficult”. These results prove that fourth year students still consider written expression module as a difficult module.

#### Question Five

How many times do you write in class?

- a- Every session
- b- Once a week
- c- Once a month

■ Every session   
 ■ Once a week   
 ■ Once a month



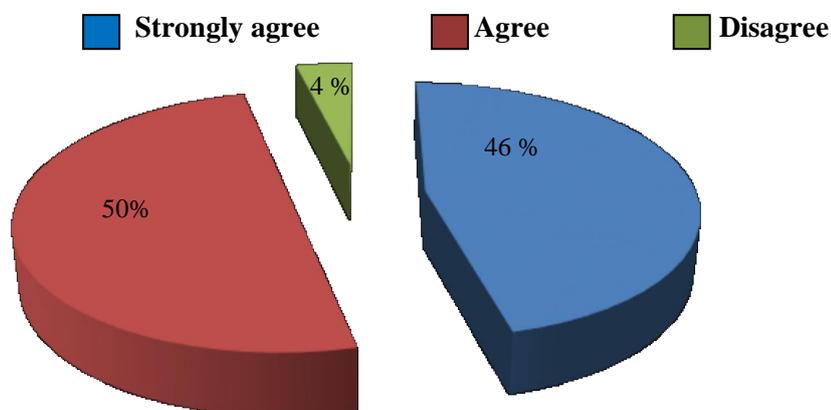
Graph 3.5: Writing in Class

As reported by 69,23 % of the students, they said that they write in class almost every session. 30,77 % of them claimed that they write in class one time per week. This finding is very encouraging since it confirms that our students have practical session in which they may write individually, in pairs, or in groups.

### Question Six

What does Writing mean to you?

- a- A way to express myself
- b- A way to communicate with people
- c- A way to record personal experiences
- d- A way to get marks



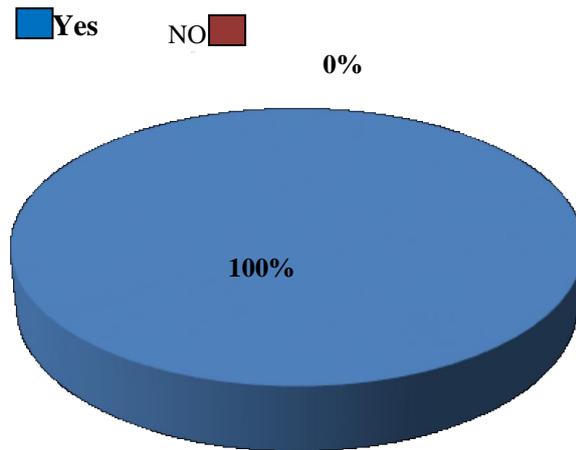
Graph 3.6.a: Writing as a way to express myself

50 % of the students claimed that they consider writing as a way to express themselves, 46,15 % of the agree with that assumption while 3,85 % are disagree. This reflects that students believe in the expressive function of writing.

### Question Seven

Do you have some difficulties while writing?

- a- Yes
- b- No



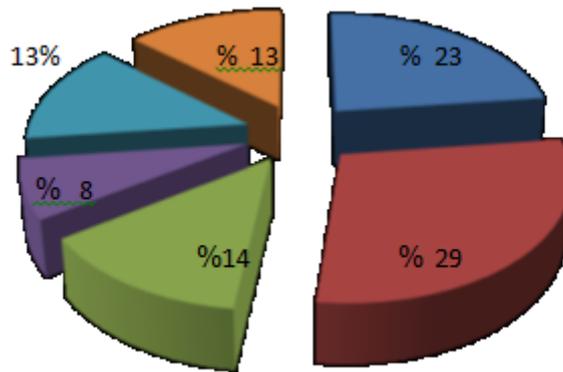
Graph 3.12: Writing Difficulties

As it was expected, 100 % of the students said that they have difficulties while writing. It is a serious problem that encounters forth year students.

If yes, do you think that your writing problems is due to?

- a- Grammar
- b- Vocabulary
- c- Insufficient time
- d- Teacher's role
- e- Lack of motivation to Write
- f- Fear of negative comments





Graph 3.12.a: Students' Difficulties in Writing

If we classify the findings in terms of priorities, the students classified their difficulties in writing as follows: vocabulary (15 times), then grammar (12 times), then insufficient time, lack of motivation and fear of negative comments (7 times) for each, and finally the teacher's role (4 times). This indicates that students have problems with the formal characteristics of language.

▪ **Discussion of the Results of the Questionnaire**

The analysis of the questionnaire support the hypothesis stated at the beginning of the research in that it confirm that writing is a very complex skill because students have many difficulties when it comes to grammar and vocabulary. Students still center their focus on the mechanics of writing. 100% of the sample stated that they face difficulties when composing.

The first section shows that (96%) of the students think that We module is interesting. This section also demonstrates that the great majority of students are not satisfied with their level in writing. When speaking about the time allowed for writing, we find that 65% of the students are not satisfied because, according to them, it does not provide them with enough time to practice and write.

Another problem facing the students' achievement level is the topics provided for writing. 61% of the students claimed that that the topics they are supposed to write about do not match with the other modules. When taking these obstacles in his/her mind, the student formulates a negative attitude toward that module which will affect his/her written production.

**Analysis of the Interview:**

**Question 1**

What do you think of the actual level of most of your students in writing?

All the teachers said that the level of their students in writing is low. This means that the writing skill is really a troublesome skill in that the students do not produce acceptable compositions. We believe that teachers should apply certain strategies to raise students' awareness of the importance of the writing skill.

### Question 2

Do you think that the time allocated to teaching Written Expression is sufficient to cover the aspects needed to develop the writing skills?

Teachers claim that the time allocated for the students to write is not enough. Students should feel at ease when writing, they should not write under pressure because that might not lead to a truly representation of their capacities. So, time pressure while writing should be avoided.

### Question 3

What motivates your students to write?

In order to motivate students, teachers provide them with interesting topics which are suitable to their age and needs. Also, they believed in the importance of cooperative work in motivating students to write.

### Question 4

What do you think about your students' attitudes towards writing?

The great majority of teachers claim that students have negative attitudes towards writing. It is important to know that one of the major problems which teachers face is negative attitudes from the part of their students. Therefore, it is the teachers' responsibility to ensure that students get motivated by providing them with the appropriate tools to produce accurate writing.

### Question 5

Do your students find difficulties when composing essays?

“Basic problems related to the writing process, (spelling, grammar, punctuation). In addition to those related to the essay's structure (how to form a thesis statement, an introduction body, and conclusion). Indeed, all teachers declare the fact that their students find difficulties when writing in English. This reality is closely matched to what we found when analyzing students' questionnaire. Teachers claimed that their students' lexical repertoire is poor and limited, they have grammatical errors in addition to transition, punctuation and spelling mistakes. Also, those problems related to the structure; students have problems with writing a good thesis statement and how to introduce/conclude a topic. Teachers added that the choice of the topic also influence the students' writing achievement.

All teachers said that they try hardly to build confidence among their students during the writing process by providing them with the necessary writing strategies and techniques. Also, by motivating them and providing them with items about the topic they are going to deal with.

Teachers high lightened the important role of reading. The reading passages may serve as primary sources for which writing skills can be learned because better readers tend to produce more correct writing than those who do not read at all. Also, teachers gave much importance to the cooperative work in enhancing the students' level in writing. Providing students with feedback will absolutely help them correcting their errors and make sure not to fall in them again.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

The analysis of students' questionnaire and teachers' interview reveals that students have difficulties when completing a written task. The results from both instruments showed that writing is a difficult skill which most of students are afraid of it. Their negative attitudes affect negatively their achievement level. Also, the results confirm that teachers are aware of their students' problems in writing, they try to make them much more motivated to write. Concerning the students' attitudes, the results showed that they have negative attitudes; they consider it to a difficult skill to be mastered. We conclude by saying that attitudes are necessary in the learning process. Attitudes are beneficial for students to improve their achievement level and to have more self-confidence. This confirms the hypothesis that writing as a complex and a difficult skill. Throughout the four years, students still face problems related with the different aspects of writing like grammar and vocabulary. The results of the study support the role of the teacher in our classes. The respondents show their satisfaction for the present way of teaching writing which disconfirmed our hypothesis which suggests making some changes at the level of the teaching methodology. Respondents are not satisfied at all with time and topics provided for writing. Students' attitudes toward a given task, a positive or a negative attitudes, will absolutely draw a difference in completing that task.

---

## REFERENCES

- [1] Allport, G. W. (1967). *Attitudes. Readings in attitude theory and measurement*, (M. Fishbein, ed.), John Wiley & Sons, New York: Wiley, London.
- [2] Allport, G. W. (1935). *Attitudes*. In C. Murchinson (Ed.), *Handbook of social psychology* (pp. 789-844). Worcester, MA: Clark University Press.
- [3] Baker, C. (1992). *Attitudes and language*. Avon, England: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- [4] Bem, D.J. (1970). *Beliefs, attitudes, and human affairs*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- [5] Bordens, K.S. Horowitz, I.A. (2002). *Social psychology*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Publishers.
- [6] Breckler, S. J., Olson, J.M., & Wiggins, E.C. (2006). *Social psychology alive*. Belmont, CA: Thomas Higher Education.
- [7] Byrne, D. (1979). *Teaching Writing Skills*. New Edition. Longman Handbooks for Language Teachers.
- [8] Clark, I.L. (2003). *Concepts in Composition*. New Jersey: Laurence Erbaum Associates; Inc.
- [9] Crystal, D. (1995). *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*. Cambridge: CUP.59

- [10] Eagly, A.H. & Chaiken, S. (1993). *The psychology of attitudes*. Forth worth, TX: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- [11] Frei, Peus and Kastenmuler (2008) *Teaching children to be literate*. New York: Harcourt Brace College publisher.
- [12] Flower, L. (1989). *Writer-Based Prose: A cognitive Basis for Problems in Writing*. *College English*, 41 (1).
- [13] Flower, L., & Hayes, J.R. (1981). *A cognitive process theory of writing*. *College Composition and Communication*, 32(4), 365-387.
- [14] Galko, F.D. (2009). *Better Writing Right Now*. New York: Learning Express.
- [15] Harmer, J. (2004). *How to teach Writing*. Pearson Education: Longman.
- [16] Hedge, T. (1988). *Writing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [17] Hyland, K. (2003). *Second Language Writing*. Cambridge University Press.
- [18] Hewstone, M. & Stroebe, W. (2004). *Introduction to social psychology: A European perspective*. MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- [19] Jung. (1971). *Techniques in Teaching Writing*. (3rd ed.). Oxford: O.V.P.
- [20] Lipson, C. (2005). *How to write a AB Thesis*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- [21] Leon Festinger. (1957). *Language Program Evaluation*. Cambridge University Press.
- [22] Murray, N. & G. Hughes. (2008). *Writing Up Your University Assignments and Research Projects: A practical Handbook*. UK. MC Graw-Hill Education.
- [23] Neman. (1995). *Teaching Students to Write*. Oxford University Press.
- [24] Nunan, D. (1989). *Designing tasks for the communicative classroom*. Cambridge: CUP.
- [25] Nunan, D. (1991). *Language Teaching Methodology*. London: Prentice Hall.
- [26] Nunan, D. (1999). *Second Language Teaching and Learning*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers. 61Olson, J.M., & Maio, G. (2003). Attitudes insocial behaviour. In T. Million & M. Cerneer (Eds.), *Handbook of Psychology: Personality and Social Psychology* (Vol.5, pp.229-329). New York: Wiley.
- [27] Oskamps, S., & Schultz, P.W. (2005). *Sociology, Attitudes and Opinions*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- [28] Pincas, A. (1962). Structural Linguistics and Composition Teaching to students of English as Foreign Language. *Language Learning*, 12(3), 11-23.
- [29] Starkey, L. (2004). *How to Write Great Essays*. New York: Learning Express. Triandis.(1971). *Educational Psychology*. Macmillon, New York.
- [30] Weigle, S.C. (2002). *Assessing Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. White, R. & Ardnt, V. (1998). *Process Writing*. Longman 62
- [31] Zamel, V. (1992). *Writing One's way into reading*. TESOL