

## Lecturers' perception on students writing difficulties in the international foundation programme

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Leovigildo Lito D Mallillin, <sup>2</sup> Dr. Romeo C Castillo, <sup>3</sup> Dr. Arlo R Mortos

<sup>1,2</sup> FFS-Lecturer, Gulf College, Sultanate of Oman

<sup>3</sup> English Coordinator, General Education, Far Eastern University-NRME, Fairview, Quezon City, Philippines

### Abstract

This study aims to investigate the lecturers' perception on writing difficulties of students in the International Foundation Programme of Gulf College particularly before writing, during writing and after writing.

Nineteen (19) respondents are utilized in the study. They are English lecturers in Gulf College teaching General English subjects. Purposive sampling is utilized in the study because purposive sampling is also known as judgment, selective or subjective sampling and descriptive correlation is used also because this is called a cross-sectional study under investigated.

Results show that writing difficulties before writing is observe, during writing is moderately observe while after writing is observe. It is evidently show that there is no significant relationship on writing difficulties when tested against before writing, during writing and after writing.

**Keywords:** perception in writing, writing difficulties, writing skills and writing proficiency

### Introduction

Teachers play an important role in the development of the writing skills of students particularly to those students who have no knowledge in the skills in writing. For them, this a great challenge on their part. Teachers have the skills in demonstrating how to write and what to write among their students. Reviewers and researchers have been investigating response to student writing for several decades. To what extent have these research findings influenced teachers' real-world practices? Beyond investigating teachers' mechanisms for providing feedback, this study aimed to examine what is behind those choices: What principles guide teachers and how were those philosophies formed? Do their practices appear to be consistent with their views about response? The teachers' voices have been the missing link in the research base to date. There have been surveys of student opinion about response and text analyses of teachers' comments, but only rarely have teachers themselves been utilized as primary informants in studies on response (Ferris, 2014) [6]. These questions posted will lead to where the process of writing skills is developed to the students who are unaware of the skills and process in writing. They know how to write the letters but how to start and formulate their writing is the problem.

Teaching the students the proper way of writing is a skill among the teachers, the techniques on how to write is a challenge among them and how to motivate students to write especially to students who are lazy to write aside from those students who have no idea in writing. This challenge could motivate English writing teachers or lecturers to manage their teaching effectively among their students. Preparing language teachers for blended teaching of summary writing, a mix of on-site and online instruction for college students to grasp the gist of the texts is scarce in higher education (Yang, 2014) [12]. This is not only being applicable to online instruction but can be applied to face to face teaching of writing among students. The language teachers' problems in blended teaching of summary writing fell into three categories: instructional

processes, community concerns and technical issues. The four main themes that emerged from the three categories include the following: (1) the changing roles of the teachers and students, (2) little sense of community building, (3) lack of training in blended teaching of summary writing and (4) unfamiliarity with the new systems or technologies. The language teachers' perspectives on solving these problems are to (1) distinguish the significant differences between on-site and online language teaching contexts, (2) identify strategies and techniques to facilitate students' blended learning in summary writing, and (3) develop community building skills to encourage teachers and students to actively participate in collaborative learning. These solutions shed light on the preparation of language teachers in blended teaching of summary writing (Yang, 2014) [12]. These factors mentioned above have great contributory to writing skills of students.

Teaching the students the proper way of writing could help them improve and develop their motor skills in writing. There are ways and means to help students learn on such skills. Corpora have been suggested as valuable sources for teaching English for academic purposes (EAP) particularly in writing. The focused on corpus use in classroom settings more research is needed to reveal how students react to using corpora on their own and what should be provided to help them become autonomous corpus users considering that their ultimate goal is to be independent scholars and writers. The specialized corpus was particularly valued for its direct help in academic writing because as non-native English-speaking students they wanted to follow the writing conventions of their discourse community such as academic experience, search purposes and writing tasks. The several suggestions for better corpus use with EAP students regarding the compilation of a corpus, corpus training, corpus competence and academic writing (Chang, 2014) [3].

Writing difficulties can be enhanced among the students who have the desire to do it with the help of the English lecturer because writing is one of the components in English being

used in their communication process. Learning to write means many things and learning to write means acquiring one aspect to literacy learning (Freedman, Pringle, & Yalden, 2014) [7].

**Statement of the Problem**

1. What is the perception of teachers on writing difficulties of students on
  - 1.1 Before writing,
  - 1.2 During writing, and
  - 1.3 After writing?
2. Is there a significant relationship on the perception of teachers on writing difficulties before writing, during writing and after writing?

**Method**

**Research Design**

The study used the quantitative research method particularly the descriptive correlation method. Quantitative research because it aims to answer a specific research question; it is tangible and countable in nature and the designs are predetermined and structured, remaining consistent throughout the study making them potentially reproducible. This involves the researcher(s) either intervening teachers’ perception in writing difficulties among their students. The study design is chosen based on how well it can answer the research question of interest while being ethical and cost effective (National Council for Osteopathic Research, 2014). Descriptive correlation is used also because this is called a cross-sectional study the people they are interacting with, it is a descriptive correlational study. This is called a longitudinal study. Descriptive studies generally use surveys or other methods of data collection that rely on existing records (Descriptive correlation research, 2016).

**Research Subjects**

The subjects of the study are the English Lecturers of Gulf College under the Faculty of the Foundation Studies. The subjects are lecturers who are teaching General English subjects particularly on the elements of writing. They are officially lecturers in the Academic Year 2016.

**Sampling Technique**

The study employed the purposive sampling because purposive sampling is also known as judgment, selective or subjective sampling. It is a sampling technique in which researcher relies on his or her judgment when choosing members of population to participate in the study. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method and it occurs when elements selected for the sample are chosen by the judgment of the researcher. Researchers often believe that they can obtain a representative sample by using a sound judgment

which will result in saving time and money (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012) [10].

**Research Instrument**

For data gathering purposes, the researcher used a standard set of questionnaire that elicited the data and information on matters that pertained to the topic under study. This consisted of writing difficulties of students before writing, during writing and after writing. This is floated to the English lecturers of Gulf College under the Faculty of Foundation Studies.

The following respective scales are followed in terms of measuring the level of exposure of the respondents in their English level and perception of teachers’ writing

**1. Before Writing**

Scale	Descriptive Level	Descriptive Interpretation
4.20-5.00	Highly Observe	The students have great skills before their writing
3.40-4.19	Observe	The students have adequate skills before their writing
2.80-3.39	Moderately Observe	The students have limited skills before their writing
1.80-2.79	Not Observe	The students have little skills before their writing
1.00-1.79	Not Observe at All	The students have no skills before their writing

**2. During Writing**

Scale	Descriptive Level	Descriptive Interpretation
4.20-5.00	Highly Observe	The students have great skills during their writing
3.40-4.19	Observe	The students have adequate skills during their writing
2.80-3.39	Moderately Observe	The students have limited skills during their writing
1.80-2.79	Not Observe	The students have little skills during their writing
1.00-1.79	Not Observe at All	The students have no skills during their writing

**3. After Writing**

Scale	Descriptive Level	Descriptive Interpretation
4.20-5.00	Highly Observe	The students have great skills after their writing
3.40-4.19	Observe	The students have adequate skills after their writing
2.80-3.39	Moderately Observe	The students have limited skills after their writing
1.80-2.79	Not Observe	The students have little skills after their writing
1.00-1.79	Not Observe at All	The students have no skills after their writing

**Table 1:** Writing difficulties before writing?

S. No	Before Writing	SD	M	Description
1	Finds a topic or idea of personal interest appropriate for writing.	0.627	3.94	Observe
2	Generates ideas for writing by using strategies such as brainstorming, questioning, quick write, conferencing, clustering, webbing, discussing and drawing.	0.612	3.74	Observe
3	Accesses and gathers additional ideas and information from any sources.	0.619	3.84	Observe
4	Selects and focuses on topics given.	0.615	3.79	Observe
5	Develops a plan or approach.	0.600	3.58	Observe
6	Chooses a writing format.	0.591	3.47	Observe
7	Organizes ideas in writing.	0.600	3.58	Observe
Average Weighted Mean			3.71	Observe

Table 1 shows the writing difficulties of students before writing. Finds a topic or idea of personal interest appropriate for writing is observe (M=3.94), Generates ideas for writing by using strategies such as brainstorming, questioning, quickwrite, conferencing, clustering, webbing, discussing and drawing is observe (M=3.74), Accesses and gathers additional ideas and information from any sources is observe (M=3.74),

Selects and focuses on topics given is observe (M=3.79), Develops a plan or approach is observe (M=3.58), Chooses a writing format is observe (M=3.47) and Organizes ideas in writing is observe (M=3.58). The overall average weighted mean (3.75) which is observe. This indicates that students have adequate knowledge and skills before their writing.

**Table 2:** Writing difficulties during writing

S. No	During Writing	SD	M	Description
1	Explores ways to start.	0.596	3.53	Observe
2	Puts ideas down in paper.	0.591	3.47	Observe
3	Drafts, shapes, connects, composes and creates their writing.	0.575	3.26	Moderately Observe
4	Experiments their writings.	0.554	3.00	Moderately Observe
5	Modifies, changes and solves problems.	0.558	3.05	Moderately Observe
6	Reflects and clarifies.	0.567	3.16	Moderately Observe
7	Talks over drafts with others.	0.558	3.05	Moderately Observe
Average Weighted Mean			3.22	Moderately Observe

Table 2 shows the writing difficulties of students during their writing. It shows on the two variables which are Explores ways to start is observe (M=3.53) and Puts ideas down in paper is observe (M=3.47) which means that student here have adequate skills and knowledge during their writing. On the other hand the rest of the variables during writing is moderately observe which are Drafts, shapes, connects,

composes and creates their writing (M=3.26), Experiments their writings (M=3.00), Modifies, changes and solves problems (M=3.05), Reflects and clarifies (M=3.16) and Talks over drafts with others (M=3.05). The average overall weighted mean (3.22) which is moderately observe. This indicates that students have limited knowledge and skills during their writing.

**Table 3:** Writing difficulties after writing

S. No	After Writing	SD	M	Description
1	Rereads during and after drafting.	0.584	3.37	Moderately Observe
2	Rethinks what has been written.	0.584	3.37	Moderately Observe
3	Reviews and edits content	0.600	3.58	Observe
4	Reviews and edits form and organization	0.596	3.53	Observe
5	Checks language for clarity, precision and appropriateness.	0.603	3.63	Observe
6	Confers and discusses	0.588	3.42	Observe
7	Shows concern for overall appearance	0.603	3.63	Observe
8	Shares by reading aloud, readers circle, displaying what he/she writes.	0.600	3.58	Observe
Average Weighted Mean			3.51	Observe

Table 3 shows writing difficulties of students after their writing. Two variables under after writing is moderately observe which are rereads during and after drafting and rethinks what has been written (M=3.37) it shows that students here have limited skills and knowledge after writing. Reviews and edits content is observe (M=3.58), Reviews and edits form and organization is observe (M=3.53), Checks language for

clarity, precision and appropriateness is observe (M=3.36), Confers and discusses is observe (M=3.42), Shows concern for overall appearance is observe (M=3.63), and Shares by reading aloud, readers circle, displaying what he/she writes is observe (M=3.58). The overall average weighted mean (3.51) is observe which means that students after writing have adequate knowledge and skills after writing.

**Table 4:** Correlation result on the significant relationship between before, during and after writing difficulties

Variable	Computed r-value	Relationships *Significant *Not Significant	Hypotheses *accepted *rejected
Difficulties in writing			
Before	0.003	Not Significant	Accepted
After	0.002	Not Significant	Accepted
During	0.003	Not Significant	Accepted
Significant at 0.05 level, one tailed test, df at 17 with critical value of 0.410			

As observed in table 4 on the correlation result on the significant relationship between before, during and after writing. It shows that the computed r-value of before writing is 0.003 which is lower than the critical value of 0.410 shows not significant and the hypothesis is accepted, while after writing shows the r-value of 0.002 which is also not significant and

the hypothesis is accepted, hence, after writing shows the r-value of 0.003 which is not significant and the hypothesis is accepted. The results show that there is no significant relationship between before, during and after writing which means the hypothesis is accepted.

## Discussion

Writing difficulties among students has a great impact in their learning process. The skills are being taught to them. Lots of factors are being observed among them before, during and after writing. Consider also the level of learning of students in their writing skills and their capacity skills which is limited. The respondents are not used to write in English because they are exposed to Arabic language and their mode of learning is Arabic. Teaching the proper technique in writing could help students alleviate their writing skills. The activity of producing a text is a complex one involving three main cognitive processes: Planning, translating, and revising. Although these processes are crucial in skilled writing, beginning and developing writers seem to struggle with them, mainly with planning and revising (Limpo, Alves, & Fidalgo, 2014) <sup>[8]</sup>. When proper planning, translating and revising is demonstrated on the part of the students, there is an effect on the improvement of their writing skills since the increase in planning, revising and translating could contribute to the high-level skills of students' writing, supplementary instruction and practice among them (Limpo, Alves, & Fidalgo, 2014) <sup>[8]</sup>.

Before writing, generate ideas for writing, accesses and gathers information, selection of topics, develop a plan, chooses a writing format and organizes ideas is observed among the respondents. Teachers or lecturers in writing play an important role in the writing proficiency of students. Proper demonstration on how, where, what and when to write is given an emphasis among the students. It is always the intention to guide and develop sequence on the writing processes of the students depending largely on the writing competence of the students in relations to the activity being taught in writing. It requires teacher to precise with their students on their writing activity outcome inside the classroom. The more the writing activity is defined well, the more the activity outcome result better writing proficiency among the students. Writing is one of the most important in the skills proficiency of the students. It cannot simply hit or miss that could manage by the teacher (Callaghan, Knapp, & Noble, 2014) <sup>[1]</sup>.

During writing, explores ways to start, puts ideas down to paper, drafts, experiments writing, modifies, reflects and talks over drafts with one another is moderately observe among the respondents. The students know the process however they have difficulties in the formulation of their write-ups because they do not have enough knowledge on how to write, the words, vocabulary and the proper construction. However, the description and analysis of text, the interpretation of the process involved in writing and the exploration of the connection between and the institutional practices or what is being taught which are constituted and sustained through writing have a problem among them (Candlin, & Hyland, 2014). Note that students are non-native speakers and therefore English for them is new and it is a foreign language to them and that is the reason why they encounter difficulties in writing. (Seyabi, & Tuzlukova, 2014) <sup>[11]</sup> investigated the gaps in English language teaching and learning that exist between post-basic schools and universities in the Sultanate of Oman. The gaps were examined in relation to the problems that school and university language learners encounter when writing in English and to the strategies they follow to overcome these problems. The examined problems concerned writing a correct English sentence; putting the ideas together in a coherent way; choosing the right vocabulary to express

ideas and having ideas about the suggested topics and deciding how to start an essay/paragraph. Approaches to writing in the context of English as foreign language informed the study. The results indicated that both groups of students acknowledge that they have problems when writing in English (mean score 3.78 and 3.85). Data regarding writing problems suggest that majority of school and university students struggle with lexical and content aspects of writing, however university students' perceptions of the kind of problems they encounter and of the strategies to address them are more assertive. The study recommended alignment of school and university writing curricula with emphasis on ideas' development, content knowledge, critical and creative thinking. Therefore, the school or university is doing their very best to help the Omani students improve their writing skills to enhance learning process among them.

After writing, rereads, rethinks, reviews, checks, confers, shows and shares their writing which is observed among them, the students exerted a lot in their writing though they have difficulty in doing it, they are trying to follow the instructions given by their lecturer however; they have insufficient knowledge about their writing. Advances in technology, changes in communication practices, and the imperatives of the workplace have led to the repositioning of the role of writing in the global context. This has implications for the teaching of writing in schools. This article focuses on the argumentative essay, which is a high-stakes genre. The writing practices can be inferred from material artifacts, as well as critical discourse analysis, it showed that the argumentative genre is complex, especially for novice first additional language English writers. The implications of planning, particularly in relation to thinking and reasoning, the need to read in order to write argument and how social and school capital are insufficient without explicit instruction of the conventions of this complex genre (Dornbrack, & Dixon, 2014) <sup>[5]</sup>.

Since there is no significant relationship between before, during and after writing, this study must give emphasis on what a teacher does, to be more vigilant in teaching writing to students and to be more fruitful in the enhancement of writing skills among them to alleviate if not to eradicate problems encountered by the students in their writing difficulties. Looking students at this point of view, what we saw was not student failing to learn to write. We saw student succeeding in learning to write poorly. Student at succeeding and acquiring a skill in writing that would permit them with increasing economy of effort to meet the demand of the university or college and adult work. These students did not know one must ask what would cause them to care that the path they were on would at best to polish mediocrity and would most likely lead to writing of the kind of people point to in lamenting to decline literacy (Freedman, Pringle, & Yalden, 2014) <sup>[7]</sup>.

## Conclusions

Based on the findings, it is concluded:

1. Writing difficulties before writing is observed among the students, which means that students have adequate knowledge in writing while during the writing is moderately observe among the students which means students have limited knowledge in writing. Hence, difficulties after writing is observe which means that students also have adequate knowledge in writing.



2. There is no significant relationship on the writing difficulties as tested against before writing, during writing and after writing among the respondents.

### Recommendations

Based on the conclusion, it is recommended:

1. English Lecturers must be more vigilant in the proper demonstration of writing skills among their students since students have difficulties in the writing techniques. Emphasis must be given to techniques in writing, accuracy, focus, development, vocabulary and coherence to improve writing skills among the respondents.
2. A thorough study must be given emphasis since there is no significant relationship on the writing difficulties among the students in terms of before, during and after writing. This includes proper writing efficacy, level of capacity in writing, unity and proper methods of writing.

### References

1. Callaghan M, Knapp P, Noble G. Genre in practice. The powers of literacy: A genre approach to teaching writing, 2014, 179-202.
2. Candlin CN, Hyland K. Writing: Texts, processes and practices. Routledge, 2014.
3. Chang JY. The use of general and specialized corpora as reference sources for academic English writing: A case study. *ReCALL*. 2014; 26(02):243-259.
4. Descriptive correlation research, 2016. Retrieved from <https://www.cliffsnotes.com/study-guides/...in.../descriptivecorrelational-research>.
5. Dornbrack J, Dixon K. Towards a more explicit writing pedagogy: The complexity of teaching argumentative writing. *Reading & Writing*. 2014; 5(1):8.
6. Ferris DR. Responding to student writing: Teachers' philosophies and practices. *Assessing Writing*. 2014; 19:6-23.
7. Freedman A, Pringle I, Yalden J. Learning to write: first language/second language. Routledge, 2014.
8. Limpo T, Alves RA, Fidalgo R. Children's high-level writing skills: Development of planning and revising and their contribution to writing quality. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*. 2014; 84(2):177-193.
9. National Council for Osteopathic Research. 2014. Retrieved from [www.ncor.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Quantitative\\_research\\_methods.pdf](http://www.ncor.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Quantitative_research_methods.pdf)
10. Saunders M, Lewis P, Thornhill A. Research Methods for Business Students. 6<sup>th</sup> edition, Pearson Education Limited, 2012, 288.
11. Seyabi FA, Tuzlukova V. Writing problems and strategies: An investigative study in the Omani school and university context. *Asian Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*. 2014; 3(4):37-48.
12. Yang YF. Preparing language teachers for blended teaching of summary writing. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*. 2014; 27(3):185-206.