Major Writing Challenges Experienced by EFL Learners in Soran University

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Abstract—The current research aims to investigate the challenges that EFL learners face in essay writing skills and the common errors they make in their English writing. One of the major aspects of language development and academic achievement among students at all levels of the education system is the capacity to achieve communicative competence in writing skills. Though, one of the essential problem learner faces at university is, learning to master essay writing skills. A descriptive survey research design was adopted in this study. The sample of the study are 32 randomly chosen third year students of English Department at the Soran University. To achieve the aims of the research, a mixed methodology was selected, through which data was collected through the students’ questionnaire, and a collection analysis of thirty-two randomly chosen essays. A research results obtained from students’ questionnaires indicated that major difficulties that student’ encounter are in grammar, organizing ideas, punctuation, and vocabulary. The challenges that students face in writing essay include: incorrect use of grammar, first language interference, limited vocabulary, punctuation marks, and word order. Based on these results, it is important for teachers to take into account students’ writing challenges, and the explanation of more writing sessions are among the pedagogical implications.

Index terms—English Foreign Learners (EFL), Writing Skills, Essay Writing Difficulties, Common Errors.

I. INTRODUCTION

It is clear that English is considered as the mean of communication used globally. However in the Kurdistan Regional Government English language is still regarded as a foreign language and EFL students particularly Kurdish students, underachieve in language proficiency especially between passive features of English language acquisition, especially in essay writing, most of EFL students struggle in doing writing assignments. Writing skills has greatly attracted the concentration of researchers as being very important skill that contributes in learning any language and outside of which education is greatly impossible (Shangarfan, & Maninpour 2011).

As it seems to most researchers, the process of writing is the most difficult skill to improve; it needs a lot of time and requires more attention. In addition, for EFL, ESL students writing skill is significant, because despite of being a mean of communication, in educational contexts, it is also the major factor for a successful and much better academic performance. However, it is usually problematic learning to write well; most of the students often face various difficulties in writing and they believe that it as a challenging task to take that affects their esteem.

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study tries to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the challenges and difficulties that third year EFL students of English Department at Soran University face?
2. What errors are the common mistakes in essay writing?

A- Literature Review

Definition of Writing Skill

Writing is a graphical symbol of speech. In both writing and speaking skills student is involved in communicating his/her thoughts and feelings. In case of speaking, a communication situation exists between the speakers who convey his/her message to the listener. However, in case of writing it is quite different; the writer conveys his message through his feeling and ideas. Furthermore, writing is an act of forming letters or characters and artfully putting them together so as to express ideas; an essential component of any language learning. Sperling & Fredman (2001) tried to define the nature of writing as a set of sub process that includes planning and reviewing. Observing this process, the researchers believe that writing an essay needs steps to be followed. Regardless, there are some points to keep in mind such as; the quality of language and the addressee which is written about.

Concept of Writing Skill

One of the tools of human communication is Language. Individuals use language in their daily life, amenably or prolifically. Though, through the use of language individuals express their feelings, opinions, perceptions, imaginations, as well as passing on everything to the other. Furthermore, language is not merely used as a medium to communicate, but also as a method of presenting human intelligence. This is the reason why language is usually recognized as an indicator of intellectuality (Saleh, 2018).

Moreover, Saleh (2018) also stated that there are four basic language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these skills the skill of writing is one of the most difficult one, which EFL students face as they must master this necessary communication skill that cannot be ignored. Writing skills can be conveyed culturally or can be taught through official instruction. Among the four language skills, writing and speaking are the productive skills.

Lado (1971) states that: “writing is a graphic representation of a language and information is conveyed through the written medium by the use of conventional graphemes.” Writing a well-structured English
Main Challenges of Writing Skills

Writing properly is considered as a crucial challenge for native and nonnative students. The most common difficulties occur due to incompetence in syntax, coherence and the absence of vocabulary, idea expansion, content selection, sentence subject, technicalities and organization in addition to the unsuitable use of vocabulary. Additional research is needed to discover and survey those facts that negatively affect students' writing skills, since issues in writing can be more old-handled if the factors that generate them are prefixed (AbuRass, 2015). In his study, Mehrabi (2014) stated that in comparison to the receptive skills and possibly even than speaking, writing needs deeper knowledge of the grammatical structure. Writing, in both practical senses and the communicative sense includes distinctive attributes, which results in distinct inputs to overall language learning. Manchón (2011) as cited in (Sanjana, 2015), argued that writing is used widely in language practice for learning foreign language. Hence researchers made a variance between writing to learn language and writing to learn content. Additionally, it is clear that all sorts of writing in foreign language education provide to the progress language skills. Both writing-to-learn and learning-to-write tasks help to develop the learners' foreign language skills.

Ur (1996) recognized that the principle and purpose of writing skill is to express ideas and convey the message to the reader. Additionally, the writers should be attentive of some formal aspects such as, neat handwriting, correct spelling, correct use of punctuation and vocabulary and standard grammar. These characteristics are necessary because in higher standard of language are usually required in writing than in speaking because writing is communication. He also stated that more accuracy of expression, more careful creation, more particular and different vocabulary, is also the key features of writing. The most important point when a student submits a piece of original writing is to check whether the ideas and events presented are interesting and significant or not. Additionally, the writer should organize his thoughts and ideas and present them through the writing in a way that the readers can read, and understand it easily and feel pleased to read that. However, maintaining a fair balance between content and forms is one of the problems in teaching writing skill (Sanjana, 2015).

Klimova, (2010) as cited in (Al-Gharably, 2015), conducted a study on students at the University of Hradec Kralove, the faculty of Informatics and Management. The purpose of the study was explaining writing skills. After evaluating students written tasks, the results showed that students committed mistakes in two aspects; one of them was the stylistic aspect of students’ writing. This essentially concerns: register and appropriately, very long sentences, incorrect choice of word or a phrase etc. It also demonstrates clearly that EFL learners face this problem in writing.

Haider, 2012; Hyland, 2003 stated that, one of the most challenging areas in learning foreign language is writing. It is based on appropriate and strategic use of language with structural accuracy and communicative potential. Writing is a cognitive processes that exams memory, thinking capability and verbal command to effectively express the ideas; because expert arrangement of a text shows successful learning of a foreign language. Learner faces different writing problems at various stages of their learning. In general, these challenges can categorize into linguistic, psychological, cognitive and pedagogical categories (as cited in Fareed, Ashraf & Bilal, 2016).

Furthermore, unsuitable structure complicates the content and comprehension of the text; they struggle with the structural components of English. Likewise, an incoherent text fails to communicate ideas which reasons lack of confidence in students even if they have mastered syntactic, lexical and grammatical command over text composition. Also learners’ lack of self-confidence is affected by a strategy of teaching which does not conform to learners’ learning styles and cultural backgrounds. It is discussed that poor writing skills create from two factors: both the teacher and the student. Teachers lack appropriate educational approach to teach writing, containing effective feedback to learners and providing prompt, and most critically lack of teachers’ ability to motivate learners. Conversely students face several difficulties such as: effects of L1 transfer lack of reading, motivation, and practice (Fareed, Ashraf & Bilal, 2016).

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research instrument

The researcher used multiple instruments Students' Questionnaire and Essay Writing Test of data collection from (32) students who were selected randomly. The first instruments of data collecting in this study is the Students’ Questionnaire, that is made up of (17) mixed questions which is categorized into two main types. Questions (1) and (2) are about the students background information. Question (3) to (17), which is the second type and it is about the students’ writing ability and difficulties in writing deals with features related to students’ opinion of their level and their desire in writing, problems in writing, and to collect data on demographic characteristics. (Appendix A).

An essay writing test as a second instrument was used to determine the challenges students face in essay writing, to know about the learners’ level, and trying to recognize the common mistakes in their written works, an Essay Analysis Schedule was used to analyze and check (32) copies of students’ written essays after have been gathered and selected. Components Focused on in the Analysis of Students’ Essays contained spelling, punctuation, grammar, word order, organizing ideas, and capitalization.

B. Approach of analyses

In this study, the researcher used qualitative and quantitative data were collected by use of both closed-ended and open-ended questionnaire and an essay writing test. The data of the study were analyzed through using descriptive statistical techniques such as frequencies, percentages and the mean were used to analyze the quantitative data.

IV. FINDING AND ANALYZING

Students' Questionnaires (Part one: Background Information)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE (1)</th>
<th>Students’ Age and Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variables</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table (1) represents the social-demographic characteristics of students in the study. According to the above chart we can see that the majority of the respondents to the questionnaires are females 81.25%, whereas the male respondents 18.75%. it means that female students have average level in English.

Item 3 in Table 1 demonstrates that 71.87% of the learners believe that their English level is good. 15.62% have stated to have a low level in English, while 6.25% of the learners think that their level in English is outstanding, and the remaining respondents 6.25% showed to have a low level in English. According to the answer it shows that students tie their English level in to their ability of understanding and using the various language skills such as: speaking, reading, writing and listening.

The Results in Table 2 shows that the majority of respondents 71.87%of the learners like writing skills, while 28.12% of the participants do not like it. Majority of the students have high desire for writing skills, these results could be interpreted in the way that most students like to practice writing, and they have a positive attitude towards it.

The results show that the majority of the participants state that grammar 20.58%, organization of writing 19.11%, and punctuation 16.17% were the most common aspects of difficulties in writing skills. Most of the students think that grammar is difficult part when writing an essay; as we know to write a good English essay is not very easy. It requires an ability of assessing a good grammar, so the biggest challenge is derived from the difference in grammar rules between the students’ mother tongue and English or maybe because of low understanding and practice of the grammar rules, or the generalization of rules in the case of EFL learners. The organization of ideas is the second challenge that face by EFL students, most of them believe it is difficult to organizing of writing, this is may be due to the lack of information about academic writing and the strategies of writing skills. During the marking of students’ essay test the researcher has found that the students faced difficulty in this aspect. The last difficulty is related to the punctuation marks, the students essay shows it clearly, because they had lack of using punctuation this is related to the students careless, do not welling and, low practice in it. 14.70% of respondents were vocabulary. Difficulties in writing concerned with the part of vocabulary come from the challenging fact of finding exact words each time they write. In this occasion, EFL students have a limited vocabulary with less knowledge and training in using word choice which effects in a repetition of words, the misuse of vocabulary items and ambiguity of meaning in their writing. The results were equal 11.76% for both participants that state spelling and coherence are one of the most difficult skills for both native and non-native speakers.

According to the question number four in table 3 nearly 56.25% of the students indicated to be a good writer, moreover 21.87%states that they have an average ability in writing. Moreover, few students 6.25% have recognized themselves to be very low ability writers, 12.5% of the learners believed that they have low ability in writing, and 3.12% as outstanding writers. The results demonstrated that they are good writer in English, it means the learners like writing skill, they want to practice more and progress their ability for different purposes. Another reason is may be because they are third year students and they have studied most of the techniques of writing in their previous years it makes them to believe that they are good writer; however writing is one of the most difficult skills for both native and non-native speakers.
TABLE (5)
The Degree of Dictionary Use and Writing outside the Classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>40.625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>46.875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>78.125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15.625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. How often do you write outside the classroom?

9. Do you think that reading skill is important in improving your writing?

11. Which of the following writing steps do you use?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Making a list</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mapping</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brainstorming</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15.625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free writing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15.625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making a list</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mapping</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. Which of the following steps of writing do you think difficult to use?

Item number seven based on the assumption that in writing essay, how often do the students use dictionary?

Most of the sample respondents which is 40.62% shows that often students use dictionaries in writing an essay, because most of the EFL students are for the search of synonyms and their meanings to use them in their writing, and also as a way of enriching their vocabulary. Another reason EFL learners use dictionary to translate Kurdish words into English and to find out appropriate vocabulary or may they do not know the real English word. While 37.5% shows rarely, 18.75% states always, and 3.12% never use dictionaries in writing essay.

In answer to the question number eight, high portion of the samples, which is 46.87% clarified that rarely they write outside the classroom, 37.5% stated often, 9.37% claimed always, and 6.25% said never. The researcher believes that improving writing skill is done through continuous practice and writing outside the classroom which is one of the most essential ways in developing this skill. So when students write more often especially outside the classroom it helps them to find out their errors and to make a progress. As can be observe in table 5 item number nine demonstrated that 78.12% of students indicated that reading skill is important in improving writing, while 15.62% of them claimed often. Furthermore, 3.12% students believed that rarely reading integrate with writing give good result, and 3.12% said never. The result show that most of the students believe that reading skill is an important skill to improving their writing because through reading they will increase their vocabularies in various fields, organize their ideas, and develop their writing.

TABLE (6)
The Degree of using and Difficulties of Writing Steps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>78.125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21.875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brainstorming</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free writing</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>56.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. Do you know how to write an outline?

14. Do you pay attention enough about the punctuation marks when writing an essay?

15. Do you think that lack of vocabulary is a reason for poor essay writing?

Item number ten is based on the assumption that internet networking and SMS chatting affect students’ English writing or not? A large number of the sample, which is 78.12% claims that yes it affects their writing, while 21.87% states no. The results show that technologies play an essential role in students’ practice of writing. Besides, it indicates that learners are aware of how to take benefit of these tools in improving their writing skill. At the same time, it has negative impact on the students’ handwriting, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and grammar failures could be due to use of such technological tools.

Also, 56.25% of the students claim that the most common writing technique they use is free writing. Then, 25% of them states that they use brainstorming techniques of writing. 6.25% of the students follow making a list, and 3.12% of the sample use mapping to collect information. The results show that most of the learners use free writing techniques and some of them follow brainstorming tool in writing an essay. These choosing of writing methods is linked to their English level, practice in addition to the previous information they have about a specific writing technique. 50% of the students, believed that mapping is the most difficult technique, followed by making a list with a lower percentage, which is 12.5%, while 15.62% of the sample state that both brainstorming and free writing are difficult techniques to use. Majority of the participant which take a great area agreed that mapping is the most common and difficult technique to follow during writing essay, because it is difficult for the students to organize their ideas, views, opinion, they have never practice it in the term of paragraph organization, and don’t have enough information about how to use it. Further, the teachers need adapt their educational approaches and can to design such tasks that could help the students to use different techniques during writing essay help them to practice more inside the classroom in order to be familiar with the steps of writing, motivate and encourage students by giving them liberty of choosing topic of their interest.

TABLE (7)
Students’ Writing Ability and Difficulties in Writing Essay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>71.875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>28.125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>56.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>43.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>84.375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15.625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>68.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In answer to question number thirteen, 71.87% of the responses stated that they know how to write an outline, and 28.12% said they don’t know how to write it. According to the results majority of the participants able to write an outline, it shows that they had studied in the previous years of their study, and they don’t have any problem regarding on making outline, but nine students still have problems with that and don’t know how to deal with it. Table 7 shows that most of the respondents 68.75% stated they make first draft before handing in their final draft, while 31.25% of the sample does not do this, because they do not think that it is important. They have first draft in order to follow some techniques of writing and to check their spelling, punctuation, grammar error, and organizing ideas before final draft.

Regarding item number 14, 56.25% of answers said yes, 43.75% stated No. The result demonstrated that most of the students think that punctuations are essential, un correct use of it will change the meaning of the paragraph, but at the same time among 32 participants 14 students didn’t use punctuation marks, this is may be because of their less practice about it, careless, and didn’t practice outside the classroom. During marking most of the students had lack of using punctuation and they didn’t pay attention more to this part.

Regarding the last question in Table 7 majority of the respondents 84.37% of answers claimed that the lack of vocabulary is a reason for poor essay writing, but 15.62% stated opposite. Using suitable vocabulary is very important to write an essay when the learners do not have enough vocabulary they will not able to write well and academic essay. According to the open-ended question which is number sixteen; most of the students have the same ideas that the teacher has a great role in teaching writing skills as one of the essential and difficult skill for EFL learners. They stated that it is important for the teachers to use different methods of teaching writing, in order to help and motivate students; play those videos that show the steps how to write academic essay, giving extra homework, teaching and clarifying strategies of writing, more practicing, and applying various tasks inside the classroom. Another essential point that the students have mentioned, that they need extra lectures in the area of writing in practical way.

V. ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS’ ESSAY WRITING

In this study student' essay writing used as a second instrument of collecting data, 32 copies of written essay have been collected and marked by researcher and two other English teachers for identifying the main errors in their writing and to have a closer look at students' actual level and obtain the validity of the method. The results indicated that third year students have problems in writing essay, in terms of using correct grammar in sentences, punctuation, word order, picking the suitable vocabulary, and cohesive coherence of paragraphs. Challenges in teaching writing are complex, based on the challenges above, it is important for the teachers to match the tasks that they ask the students to perform with their language level and the teachers should remember that students need to be helped during the process of learning to write.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Frequency of Error</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Word Order</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>12.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Tens(Grammar)</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>16.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Spelling</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>12.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Capitalization</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>12.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Punctuation</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>15.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Preposition</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>7.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Connection of Ideas</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>8.84%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above Table shows the analysis of students' essay, based on the results there exist three main errors with high frequency, grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary were the major errors encountered during the analysis with the percentage of (16.42%), (15.31%), and (14.05%) of the total number of mistakes. Additionally, learners' committed errors of spelling by (12.94%), word order (12.63%), and capitalization (12.08%) seemed in approximate percentages, while both connection ideas (8.84%) and preposition errors with (7.73%) take less percentage.

The result shows that student made grammatical errors like; tenses, subject-verb agreement, personal pronoun, article, auxiliary, and sentence fragment. The above errors did by the learners approve the outcome of students' questionnaires. They certainly assumed that one of the biggest problems they are facing in the writing essay is a grammatical aspect, because it is very complicated and challenge for the learners to write sentences with correct English structure.

The same case in terms punctuation, vocabulary, and word order may be the learners do not comprehend them because the lecture has never explained them in detail, especially in terms of providing the learners with a set of drills, and the lack of low practicing by using different methods of teaching in order to help and motivate the students to write academic essay.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Teaching writing has been a column in foreign language teaching for many years. The difficulties of writing skill are one of the most important issues that affect, not only hundreds of students that are learning English as a second or foreign language round the world, but also native English speakers, because it requires an attainment of sufficient linguistic proficiency (Hinkel, 2004). As a cognitive process, writing skill requires careful use of the target language, and profound considerations to the rules especially grammar and structure of writing. In general, foreign learners during writing essay, hesitate to write, because they try to find the suitable vocabulary, they may find punctuation, capitalization difficult, or struggle with the grammar of the language. Based on the findings of this study, it shows that students have various writing challenges. According to the results achieved from the questionnaire, it seems that the main challenges that learners face are grammar, organizing ideas, and punctuation, and the most difficult technique of writing for the students were mapping, this maybe because of their lack knowledge about basics of writing, lack of practice, practice, traditional teaching and students' weak academic backgrounds.

While, the results obtained from the analyzing students essay show that the majority of errors found in content mastery, use of correct grammar, word choice, punctuations, word order, and organizing ideas. These challenges lead to students' low achievement in essay writing; this would be fairly attributed to expository teaching methods engaged by teachers which maximum students' participation in the learning process. Students generally write essay in English without any idea about organizing their ideas, it refers to the fact that they have not taught the basics of writing skills, most of the teachers suppose that the students have the basic knowledge of writing therefore they ignore practicing them and start with writing paragraphs and essays in early stages.

So, the researcher advises the teachers who teach Writing skill at first and second stage to use a fixed curriculum as writing book in order to enable the learners to practice the basics of writing such as punctuation, word order, linking ideas and etc.
APPENDIX A
STUDENTS QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Students,

Enclosed questionnaire is meant to find out information on challenges EFL learners face in essay writing at Soran University. We will be grateful if you answer the questions frankly; your participation in filling these questionnaires means your participation in improving the process of teaching and learning of essay writing skills at university. We inform you that your answers will be completely anonymous and used for scientific research only. Please read the questionnaire then select by ticking or circling one of the scales provided for each item.

Thank you

Researcher:

Part One General Information

1. Age:
   Gender: Male ( ) Female ( )

2. How do you assess your English level?
   □ Outstanding
   □ Good
   □ Average
   □ Low
   □ Very low

Part Two: Students’ writing proficiency and difficulties in writing:

3. Do you like writing?
   □ Yes
   □ No

4. How do you assess your writing ability?
   □ Outstanding
   □ Good
   □ Average
   □ Low
   □ Very low

5. Which of the following parts do you think are difficulties in writing an essay? (You can choose more than one answer)
   □ Grammar
   □ Vocabulary
   □ Punctuation
   □ Spelling
   □ Coherence and cohesion
   □ Word order
   □ Preposition
   □ Organization of writing

6. In written assignments do you usually follow the steps of writing?
   □ Yes
   □ No

7. In writing essay, how often do you use dictionaries?
   □ Always
   □ Often
   □ Rarely
   □ Never

8. How often do you write outside the classroom?
   □ Always
   □ Often
   □ Rarely
   □ Never

9. Do you think that reading skill is important in improving your writing?
   □ Always
   □ Often
   □ Rarely
   □ Never

10. Do you believe that internet networking affects your English writing?
    □ Yes
    □ No

11. Which of the following writing steps do you use?
    □ Brainstorming
    □ Free writing
    □ Making a list
    □ Mapping

12. Which of the following steps of writing do you think difficult to use?
    □ Brainstorming
    □ Free writing
    □ Making a list
    □ Mapping

13. Do you know how to write an outline?
    □ Yes
    □ No

14. Do you pay attention enough about the punctuation marks when writing an essay?
    □ Yes
    □ No

15. Do you think that lack of vocabulary is a reason for poor essay writing?
    □ Yes
    □ No

16. In your point of view, to what degree teachers can help to overcome the obstacles that learners face? How?

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.................................................................

17. Do you usually make a first draft beforehand in your final draft?
    □ Yes
    □ No

REFERENCES


