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# **Graduation Project Final draft**

## **The Difficulties of Learning English Writing Skills for High School Students**

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I certify that all material in this proposal is my own work.

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Bashair, October 18, 2015

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## **Abstract:**

This research focuses on the difficulties that faces high school student in Saudi Arabia. The current study will search for the reasons and factors that affect on good writing. This research will be conducted on 20 students. Students will be given a sheet of paper .we will ask every student to write a piece of writing. Then, we will check the writing and see their mistakes. After that, we will ask each student to what is the most difficult thing they face. We will see their weakness and problem. To achieve a good result, we are going to select different levels of students. We will choose the excellent students and poor once also. By this way, we will be able to see the different levels

## **Introduction:**

English is an international language; it's considered to be the first language in the world. We can see that every research, invention, experiment, technology, science magazine and more are written in The English language. It is the only language that you can use everywhere without caring about the place or the country you are visiting. As a result, it's imperative for everyone to acquire this language. The English language is taught all over the Arab countries as a second language because of its importance.

Learning English language has some difficulties. These difficulties can differ from one person to another or from age to another, from a country to another country and from skill to another skill. For example, children can learn and acquire English easier than adults. Thus due to children lack of the first language. The child easily uses the second language new vocabularies because he doesn't have a full complete first language. So they usually use the first language in everything and don't have to use second language new vocabulary.

## **Literature review:**

In our research, we are going to deal with English learning difficulties for adults because they have many things that prevent them from acquiring the language easily. To learn English, you have to acquire four main skills; reading, writing listening and speaking. Each skill has its problems and difficulties due to everyone abilities. The most important two skills that always make problems to the learners are writing and speaking. These two skills have some deep problems that confuse the students during their studying.

First of all, writing difficulties have many branches to be discussed. First, there are silent letters that aren't pronounced but they are written. Second, there are doubled letters that are written as two letters but pronounced as one letter. Third, there is two letters combination that gives you another different sound. Fourth, some letters are pronounced but not written. Sixth, there are two words have the same pronunciation but differ in writing and meaning. Finally, writing a correct, complete sentence is not easy (according to Ms Hughes,1999).

In the beginning, we are going to illustrate the first problem the silent letters that aren't pronounced but they are writing. For examples; the word "knee" the letter "K" here is silent so many of the learners can write it as "nee". The same case in "write" "W" is silent. Also in "right", "gh" is silent .All these words are more make the learner give about dictation. They found this very hard to recognize the missing letters. For Arab students, their mother tongue is Arabic. In their language, each letter must be pronounced. So, it's tough for them to accept the rule of not pronouncing letters that are already written. To overcome this problem student should practice more and more these words and study their rules. For examples the word "knee", "knife", "knight" have the rule of not pronouncing "K" before "n"; If the learner knows this rule, it will be easy for him to overcome this problem. Another rule is the word "write" when "W" become before "R" we must not pronounce "W" before "R" . This rule also is very simple and can help the learners a lot in developing their writing.

In shortening, there are some explicit rules for the silent letters in the words. These rules are very simple and clear which the learner must study to find it easy to write correct words and give a good writing of words or dictation.

Second, there is some doubled letter that are pronounced as one letter. For example, the word "egg"; there are two "g" but we pronounce them as one letter. Also the word "dress" we just pronounce one "s". , the word "add" we just pronounce one "d" . This case confuses the learners writing a lot , some of them write them as one letter as in "egg" written as "eg" or "dress" as "dres" or "add" as "ad" . in order to give the wrong word with a different meaning to the sentence . For this problem, the learner must try to study carefully these double letter in different words with different meaning to be able to distinguish between them. Such as the word "add" which has double "d" means more or addition while the word "ad" with one "d" means advertisement. So, he must be able to distinguish between the meaning of the word in the sentence to write the correct spelling and give the suitable word in the suitable sentence(according to Dana Adas, Ayda Naked zolo, 1997).

Third, there are two sound combination with different letters gives one sound. For example , the word "phone" "ph" here gives the sound /F/. Many students ask why we don't just write /F/ instead of "ph" why we use "ph" during the language already have the sound /F/. Unfortunately, there are answers to these question. Another examples , "sh" which gives the sound /ʃ/, "ch" which gives the sound /tʃ/ , "th" which , "gives two different sounds /θ/ and /ð /, /θ/ as in "thin" and /ð/ as in "then kh" which gives the letter"

"خ"

in Arabic, "gh" which gives

"غ"

in Arabic as in "Ghada" and /F/ in English as in " rough" .There are a lot of other examples; these can confuse the learner in writing a good or correct word because of these various letters and sounds. To get rid of this problem, the learner have to memorize these letters and their pronunciation cases and places. Thus can help a lot in improving the ability to write correctly.

Fourth, there are just vowels in The English language that confuse most of the learners of English language. In spite of, they are just five letters, they have a tenth of different pronunciation cases that is very hard to realize and acquired. These

various sounds confuse the learners in a very hard way that we will illustrate in the following.

Some vowels look like the same in writing but differ in pronunciation. For examples, the word "food" has two vowels "oo" that is transcribed as /fud/ while there is the word "book" that have two vowels "oo" but has different pronunciation as /buk/. In this case, they have the same letter but differ in sound. Another example can be found in the word "house" the vowels "ou" pronounced as /aʊ / and become /haʊs/ while, on the other hand, the word "tour" have the same two vowels "ou" but pronounced as /tʊr/ to be written as /tour/ but the word "tower" has the same sound of house but differ in letters . In "tower" "ow" is as /aʊ/ and become as "ou" in house . These simple examples make it very difficult to learners to give true writing in such these confusing cases (according to Gomaa 2010).

Another problem in vowels is pronouncing the /u/ vowel . It has many ways to pronounce in many different words . for example , the word "uncle, aunt" when we pronounce /u/ in "uncle" it is as /ʌŋ.kl/ while in "aunt" we pronounce /au/ as /ɑːnt/ .Also in "university , unit , and united " , in these words the letter "u" here is pronounced as /j/ as /juːnɪt/ . Another examples in "up , cut " the transcription of these words as /ʌp/ and/ ʌt/ which means a third different sound . Furthermore in the word "put " the letter "u" here is as /put/ ; this is the fourth sound.

Furthermore, the letter /a/has a different pronunciation in different cases and words. Such as in "cat" ; "A" here as /æ/ /kæt/, in "mall" "A" here as "u"/ mɔːl/ . In "sale" A here as /seɪl/, in means the letter is not pronounced ;it's silent .in "above" "A" letter is as schwa /ə/ as /əˈbʌv/.These cases are not the only cases; it is just some few examples to show how one be pronounced more than four different sounds.

All the previous examples of vowels problems that face the learner of English language are just some examples but not all of them. The solution to this problem is very difficult, but it can be successful. The learners must learn and study phonetics from the beginning of their studying course to be able to know and understand the several position and sound for each vowel. They must be taught the symbols for each vowel and also study the diphthongs and the trip thongs, the short and long vowels, the high and mid or low vowels and finally the front, central and back vowels. The process of studying phonetics will help a lot the learners to

understand and not to confuse. By this way, their writing will be developed and improved perfectly, easily and the true good way (Flangin and Rudd,2009).

Fifth, there are some letters that are pronounced but not written which seems ambiguous for many learners. For example, the word "age" in this word we pronounce as /eɪdʒ/ /dʒ/. Also the word "measure" here the letter "su" pronounce as /dʒ/. This can have the same cases of the problem of the sound /ʃ/. The sound /ʃ/ can be found in many cases as "sh" in "ship", "ti" in "nation", "su" in "sure" and "tu" in "capture". The different pronunciation, position, cases of producing /ʃ/ confuses many students. Thus must be studied and cleared for the learners.

Sixth, there are two words have the same pronunciation but differ in meaning and letters. For example, the example "meet" and "meat" "meet" means to go and see someone while "meat" means food. They also have different letters, not the same letters. Another example is in the word "desk" and "disk" the first word mean a piece of furniture like the table but the second mean advice as CD. They also differ in letters but pronounce the same. These words and more have made many troubles for learners. To overcome this problem, the teacher must emphasize on these similarities and difference. This will make it easy to distinguish between them and know the difference.

Finally, giving a good sentence is not an easy task it can be a very difficult thing for any new learners for The English language. A lot of student faces many problems in forming a good, correct sentence. Each sentence in English must have a subject, verb, and object or without the object. Helping verbs are the most confusing thing in the sentence. In the Arabic language, there are not any helping verbs. As a result, there are many mistakes in forming a sentence. For example "Ahmad eating lunch " this sentence does not have a helping verb so it is not correct it should be " Ahmad is eating lunch " The lacks knowledge of the importance and meaning of helping verbs in the sentence. The use of do, dose, is, are, am .has. have and how to use them in their true position in a sentence as main verbs or negative as helping verbs and in yes or no questions.

## **Significance of research:**

Learning English is very important in our age. English is the first language of the world. The internet websites, the scientific researchers, and all the new technology are written in English. As a result, it is imperative to learn English. Learning English has several ways; the internet, entertainment, and traveling.

Now, English is an international language. Even technology and working world use English. It is believed that the students want to be the winner in working world completion that is getting tight day by day. One of the conditions that are the students must require is having the ability to write English fluently. This skill will be their plus point in facing the working world. From now on, the student has to try hard to overcome their difficulties to writing English fluently.

As a result, writing is one of the main four skills that the student have to acquire to an excellent level. In high school level, students are not young anymore. They are prepared to enter the university that needs the ability to write English in a perfect way.

To solve writing problems, teachers have to include the main problems, difficulties and the ways to solve and to face them. This research tries to make a clear vision to the problem to deal with it in academic appropriate, suitable methods.

## **Research questions:**

What are the difficulties of learning English writing skills for high school students?



### **Research methodology:**

To know the most important factors that lead high school pupils to face difficulties in their writing, this research applied to 20 students. Students were given a paper and be asked to write a paragraph about their daily routine. Then, after they finish, we have divided the papers according to their mistakes. We found that 15 students have grammar mistakes, and 13 students have spelling mistakes while just five who do not make these mistakes. Also five students punctuation mistakes. Some of the students about ten have structure mistakes. By this way, we can know each person weakness and know the reason for that.

### **Ethical consideration:**

There are interviews after the writing test with the teachers . to know what they have faced with their students. What are the most weakness points? Also, ask why they do not like writing. We also compare their level in writing in Arabic as it is their mother language and in English as it is the second language. This because the one who is weak in writing in Arabic must be weak in writing in English. In this case, it does not depend on the second language.

### **Limitations of the study:**

The study followed the scientific search methodology and done in high school in Riyadh for girls. Moreover, meeting with some teachers of the students who teach them English and talk to them about the writing problems they face with their pupils in the class.

### **Expected results:**

As we mentioned before during the research paper. When we able to know the real problem and the reason, we will be able to solve it and find a suitable solution.

I noticed that about 70% of the students didn't know the reason for their weakness. Also, teachers must pay more attention and give more time for writing activity as it can develop their language. Our reason will help the teachers to focus on the problem and deal with it in the appropriate way.

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## Appendix:

Interview with the teachers and writing a composition .

- 1. write a paragraph about 80 words about your daily routine .**

[illegible]

**2.** why do you face problem in writing ?

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.....

**3.** Do you think writing is easy or difficult ?

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.....

**4.** What is the most difficult thing in writing ?

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.....

**5.** Do you think all the student face the same problems ?

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.....

**6.** What is the best solution from your opinion ?

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