

Reasons behind the poor performance of (PYP) students in writing skill:A case Study At Imam Islamic University (KSA)(2013-2014)

Nivein Azhari¹ , Nada Sid Ahmed Eljack²

^{1,2} Sudan University of Science and Technology College of Graduate Studies

Faculty of Education

ABSTRACT:

This study aims to investigate the Preparatory Year Program (PYP) students' poor performance in writing skill including methods and materials that has been delivered by the PYP department during one semester of study. An experimental and controlled group was employed in a view that enables the researcher pin down where the problems lie within a short period of time. Pre-test and post-test along with teachers' questionnaire were used as research instruments. The study sample consists of 60 female students. Teachers were given a questionnaire. SPSS was used to analyze the data obtained. The major findings include: Firstly, one term is not enough to present and practice using the material. Secondly, teachers are not using suitable materials and methodologies to improve writing skill. Thirdly; the preparatory year program program at Imam university does not provide an effective plan to to improve students writing skill.

Key words: *Reasons, Preparatory, Poor Performance, Writing skill .*

المستخلص :

تهدف هذه الدراسة الى معرفة الاسباب التي أدت الي حصول طالبات البرنامج التحضيري لدرجات متدنية في منهج مهارات الكتابة في غضون فصل دراسي واحد. لقد اتبعت الباحثة طريقة التطبيق العملي للعينه التجريبيه العشوائية و المجموعة الضابطة تم استخدام اختبارين تحصيليين في مادة المهارات الكتابية بالاضافة الي استبانة للاساتذة القائمين علي التدريس في البرنامج حيث تستنبط الاستبانة مدي كفاءة البرنامج التحضيري و فاعليته للطلاب ومدى تقبلهم و تحصيلهم في مادة المهارات الكتابية كأدوات للبحث. تشتمل عينة الدراسة علي 60 طالبة بكلية الشريعة بجامعة الامام محمد بن سعود بالمملكة العربية السعوديه. لقد قامت الباحثة بتحليل بيانات الاختبار والاستبيان, مستخدمة طريقة النظام الاحصائي. وعلى هذا الأساس كانت النتائج كالاتي : اولاً: ان الفترة (فصل دراسي واحد) ليست كافية تماما لعرض وتطبيق كل ماده المهارات الكتابية. ثانياً : لا يقدم الاساتذة القائمين علي البرنامج التحضيري الماده وطريقة التدريس المناسبين من اجل تطوير ماده المهارات الكتابية. ثالثاً: ليس للبرنامج التحضيري بجامعة الامام خطه فعاله لتطوير ماده مهارات الكتابة لدى طلابها. وعلى هذا الاساس تم التوصيل الي عدد من النتائج والتوصيات في نهاية هذه الدراسة.

INTRODUCTION:

The type of English, which is intended to provide to these students, is an intensive English course at Sharia College Imam Mohammed Bin Saud university . The materials that are granted for the course at (PYP) are designed to prepare Saudi students for the study at a university level. Therefore, this qualifying program will help them by the end to sit for a number of external examinations which include at Advance the placement Exam (APE), International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) . The study aims to evaluate the Saudi students' who intend to improve their English proficiency and want to join a university to develop their level of English comprehension and the speaking ability. This program has a great record of achievement in international exams. The PYP consists of multinational teaching staff from different countries such as the United States of America, Canada, the United Kingdom and some bilingual teachers from Lebanon, Egypt and Sudan. As such, those teachers represent a multicultural teaching staff at Al-Imam Mohamed bin Saud Islamic University. Inevitably, they will give support to the development of curriculum and the students' progress. Students during this program study 20 hours of English language per week for only one semester. The semester lasts of three months. The instructors are keen to provide additional support and guidance to students outside classroom teaching hours. This study is yielded as an observation throughout five years of teaching English at PYP Saudi universities in which the researcher has

observed that a great number of students fail in writing skill and most of them lack mastering the writing skill. (Harmer 2004 P8.4) reported that writing skill is considered as a major area where students experience difficulties. This problem occupies a central position in Saudi universities curriculum .(Harmer 1988 P.333) suggested that Such problems or failure could be greatly and effectively minimized by employing experts in the field of writing skill with the view of improving the situation if not completely eliminating the problems. This poor performance is extremely serious and important .(Jill and charless 2001 P.72) attributed the students' failure in writing to short period and poor pedagogical methods.

Objectives:

The purpose of this study is to draw attention to the students' performance in writing skill throughout one semester at Al-Imam Mohammed Bin Saud Islamic University. The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To clarify if the PYP has negative or positive effects on academic achievement of students in learning writing skill.
2. To examine the strengths and weaknesses of students' writing performance throughout the semester.
3. To encourage learners to improve their writing skill performance during the semester.
4. To propose an effective teaching methodology towards writing skill .

5. To suggest some teaching strategies to enhance writing skill .

The Main Hypotheses are

1. Preparatory program provides an effective program of study to improve writing skill for Saudi students.
2. The program satisfies Saudi learners' needs in writing skill.
3. The period of one semester (Three month) is enough to study and practice well.
4. Providing more practice to the material help gaining positive results at the end of the semester.
5. Suitable materials as pedagogy can help improve students writing skill.

The study is expected to help Saudi PYP students in general and the PYP students at Al-Imam Mohammed bin Saud Islamic University in particular. By the end of this study, teachers are expected to improve the quality of teaching techniques. This study will help Saudi government to save much money, by preventing students from going outside the country in search of better teaching quality

Materials and methods:

The scope of the study is intended to cover some of the PYP students at Al-Imam Mohammed bin Saud University, College of Sharia in Al-Ehas Branch (Eastern Area) . The rationale for this choice is due to the great failure of the PYP students in writing skill. Therefore, the researcher intends to check out where the problem lies. Descriptive and analytical approach was adopted to check the objectives of the study. A combination of a quantitative analysis and a qualitative analysis were used to

increase the reliability and validity of this study. A pre-test and post-test were used to test the students' performances. A questionnaire, on the other hand, was used for the teachers to check the factors of the situation that lead to the students' failure in writing skill. The population for the study was comprised of students at Al-Imam Mohammed Bin Saud Islamic university (120 students .The sample size of the population was 60.

The Sample :

The number of students from each group was selected randomly as follows :Group A 20 students .Group B 20 students .Group C 15 students .Group D 5 students The sub-sample is not consistent and that because of the stander, all of the 15 has nothing to do with English as well as group `D` can't differentiate between d and b letters which means their stander is more than weak . The instruments are:

1. Writing Skill Test (Pre-Test and Post-Test)

The writing skill test consists of six items .The items are well constructed after being assessed by some colleagues and research experts who work at the college .The test was designed a syllabus named ``keep Writing`` This syllabus is designed for Arab Students .The duration of the course is eight weeks and aims to test the students' writing skill abilities.

2. Questionnaire

This instrument is designed for the PYP teachers at Al-Imam Mohammed Bin

Saud Islamic University; College of Sharia in ALhsa. It contains two parts .The first part deals with the biographical information. The second part states the factors that affect the learning process .These factors are divided into three factors, that is, teachers' factors, students' factors, and the university factors. The tool of collecting data is meant mainly to obtain the teachers` views and opinions about the current syllabus. It aims to investigate the students' progress in writing skill. The Likert scale has been used in this instrument.The data

(4.1.3)Pre-test &Post-test Analysis

collection procedures started when the researcher obtained an approval letter from the authorities to conduct the study. The next step was to design the two instrument of data collection and hence handed them to research experts for assessment. The following step was to undergo some changes to the two mentioned tools based on the suggestions received. The fourth step was to do the piloting to test the validity and the reliability of the instruments. The fifth step was the administration of the instruments.

(Table 4.13)The growth result of pre-test and post-test

N o	Name of Student	Test Scores		Name of Student	Test Scores		Name of Student	Test Scores		Total Score	
		Pr e	Post		Pre	Post		Pre	Post	Pre	Post
1	Student 1	29	30	Student 21	17	24	Student 41	9	18	55	72
2	Student 2	29	30	Student 22	17	24	Student 42	9	17	55	71
3	Student 3	28	30	Student 23	17	24	Student 43	9	17	54	71
4	Student 4	28	30	Student 24	17	24	Student 44	9	17	54	71
5	Student 5	28	30	Student 25	17	24	Student 45	9	16	54	70
6	Student 6	28	29	Student 26	15	23	Student 46	9	16	52	68
7	Student 7	28	29	Student 27	15	23	Student 47	9	16	52	68
8	Student 8	28	29	Student 28	15	23	Student 48	8	16	51	68
9	Student 9	28	29	Student 29	15	22	Student 49	7	16	50	67
10	Student 10	25	29	Student 30	15	22	Student 50	7	16	47	67
11	Student 11	20	27	Student 31	14	22	Student 51	7	15	41	64
12	Student 12	18	27	Student 32	14	21	Student 52	7	15	39	63
13	Student 13	18	27	Student 33	14	21	Student 53	7	15	39	63
14	Student 14	18	26	Student 34	14	20	Student 54	7	15	39	61
15	Student 15	18	26	Student 35	14	20	Student 55	6	15	38	61

16	Student 16	18	26	Student 36	13	20	Student 56	0	12	31	58
17	Student 17	18	26	Student 37	13	19	Student 57	0	12	31	57
18	Student 18	17	25	Student 38	13	19	Student 58	0	10	30	54
19	Student 19	17	25	Student 39	12	19	Student 59	0	10	29	54
20	Student 20	17	25	Student 40	10	18	Student 60	0	10	27	53
Total										868	1281

This table shows the growth result of pre-post test. It explains the huge difference for the progress which is achieved by the students according to the new procedure. This figure shows the growth result of pre-test and post-test

shows the effectiveness of the intensive English program among preparatory year students which was applied to the students at “Sharia college of Mohammed Bin Saud Islamic University.

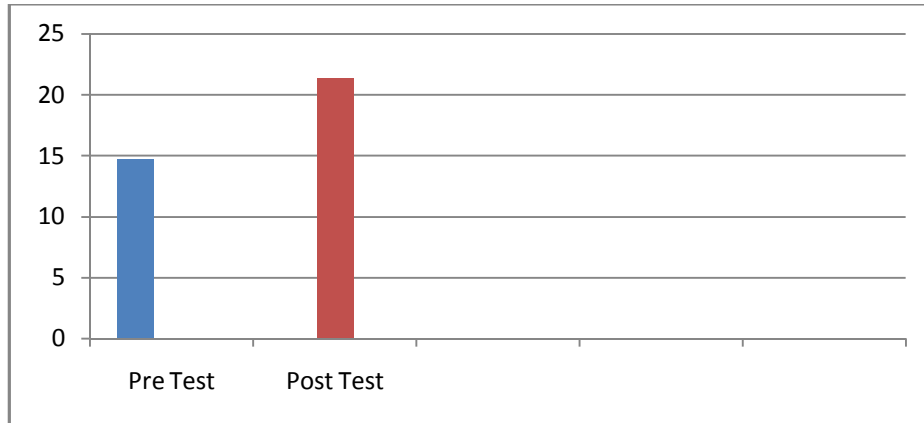


Chart.4.13 Pre-test and Post-test (growth) At the first glance we can observe that there is a speedy increase of the students' performance in the post-test than it was in the pre-test.

Discussion Testing of the Hypotheses Hypothesis (1):

Preparatory year provides an effective program to improve writing skill for Saudi students. According to the statistical analysis of both tests, the researcher finds that PYP does not help in increasing the students' performance

in writing skill. This can be observed from the difference in the students' performance in the pre-test, which is poor, and their performance in post-test which is regarded as good, compared to the pre-test. It could be true to say that the book entitled “KEEP WRITING” which is taught in “PYP” is not effective as the book entitled “ACADEMIC WRITNG” which is full of practice and drills. For the pre-test among the sample (60) students, only 10 students get grade ‘A’ with the percentage of only 16.7%. Only one student gets ‘B’ with

the percentage of 1.7%. As seen, 19 students of the total number students get grade 'C' with the percentage of 31.7%. The remaining number of 30 students (50%) get either grade 'D' or 'F' ; that is, they are very poor . However, there an instant improvement of students' performance in the post- test than it is in the pre-test. The results show that 41.7% (n= 25) of the students get grade 'A' and 15% of them get the grade 'B'. Only 33.6% of the students either get grade 'C', or 'D'. The rest of the students (8.3 %) get grade 'F', that is, they don't have the ability to write. The ultimate results show a high performance of students' writing skill. Only a few students fail in the post-test, that is the majority improve their performance. (Steve 2012 P.7) earlier observed the good skill result depends on the practice.

Hypothesis (2):

Most of the students are interested in writing skill course and never skip the lesson. The results reveal that students are not interested in PYP program because they have a consensus point of view about the preparatory year program, that it does not provide an effective program to Saudi students at Al-Imam Mohammed Bin Saud Islamic University. More to the point, the great majority of them (86.6%) think that the prescribed amount of writing skill that the students should have at preparatory year program is not quite enough to enhance their writing skill. The result agrees with (Crème 2008 P.2) who states that writing amount at university should be different and the period as well

Hypothesis (3):

The course of writing skill satisfies the students' needs towards accomplishing their skills. The results obtained indicate that most of the teachers (73.3 %) think that the program (preparatory year system) does not satisfy Saudi students`. (Harmer 1991 P7&8) mentions that can be attributed to syllabus, period, and teachers' method of teaching. In addition to that, 93% of the respondents believe that the students of (PYP) do not use the correct forms of language when they write, compared with only 7% who do not agree .

Hypothesis (4):

The program tends to make writing skill course easy and the lessons more attractive. The program doesn't tend to make writing course easier and is not attractive. The result reveals that the majority of the respondents (80%) confirm that, the students' poor marks in writing is as a result of old method of teaching. In addition to that, the result indicates that the great majority of the respondents (93.3 %) think that the preparatory year program does not encourage learners to improve writing skill. Moreover, the result explains that 93.3 % of the respondents believe that the students of preparatory year program do not write confidently in English.(Marry 2011 P.41) believes that it is quite clear that poor results in writing skill course is a result of the poor syllabus design; this was proved by the results of both tests, which show that the book "KEEP WRITING" is not as strong as the book "ACCADEMIC

WRITING” which is full of practice.
Hypothesis (5):

The period of one term is enough to teach the course perfectly and train the students well. The results point out that 93 % of the teachers think the period for one term is not enough to train the students well for writing skills because the book “KEEP WRITING” is not full of practice. For that reason, the analysis shows that the majority of the respondents (80 %) think the students do not learn intensively in the preparatory year program due to the short time allocated for writing skill. The intension of this study is to investigate the effects of preparatory year program on academic achievement on writing skill course. To achieve this aim, the subjects in the experimental group were taught the writing course “keep writing” and academic writing. The subjects in the experimental group were post-tested and the scores were analyzed. The hypotheses were tested based on the scores from the writing skill both post and pre test. There were also teaching achievement test and teacher questionnaire. The data analysis and presented in the tables. The students in the experimental group improved significantly as the result of expanding the time of writing skill course as well as the time of practice and it was one and half a hour daily for two months. Findings are in agreement with that of (Scrivener 2005 P. 116) who report that teachers' methodology favors learning, initiative and curiosity and thereby making reliance beyond increasing students' outcomes. That means students' good results depends mainly on the plan which was done

before. The possible reason for this may be increasing the period of the input and output and group interaction in the practical activities. This help is meant to present writing procedure in an easier way. This result was reported earlier with the two previous studies one in Hail university and the other in Najran university both of them are in Saudi Arabia the first one An analysis of written English Essay and the second Developing writing skill. The result shows that there is a significant difference between the students performance at the beginning of the semester and at the end with the new method and the increase in the time of writing classes. There is a need for further studies to be conducted in other PYP universities to see the effectiveness of writing skill performance and expanding the time of the course practice.

CONCLUSION :

Following those findings will contribute in improving the English language skills of Saudi students and scholars. Consequently, this opportunity provides development to the university and college teaching staff, allowing them to follow some valuable teaching methodologies that transfer them to their countries, especially the bilingual teachers. Students, on the other hand, are exposed to a wider variety of cultural backgrounds and teaching styles. Accordingly, this approach will prepare Saudi students to obtain high English language proficiency and they will be able to have invaluable chances for admission and succeed at competitive universities by providing with them a

high quality, dynamic and challenging program in which they learn in a cooperative environment under the guidance of highly qualified and enthusiastic teaching staff.

Results:

This study has been conducted with the purpose of investigating whether the preparatory year provides an effective program to improve writing for Saudi students. At the end of the study the researcher has come up with the following findings:

1. The students of preparatory year program do not use the correct forms of language when they write .
2. The period of one term is not enough to teach the courses perfectly and train the students well.

Recommendations:

Regarding the results of the study, the researcher has reached some recommendations which should be taken into consideration by authorities, teachers, and students:

1. Teachers of English language should be given special and adequate training courses in methods of teaching writing skills .
2. English language should be taught by specialized teachers so as to assist students by using different techniques and strategies in the process of teaching writing skills.
3. The textbooks should include all the types of writing skills which help to foster students' writing proficiency.

3. Poor results in writing skill are a result of the conventional teaching style.
4. The students do not learn intensively at the preparatory year program.
5. The program (preparatory year program) does not satisfy the Saudi students.
6. The practice that the students have is not enough to enhance the students writing skills.
7. The preparatory year program does not encourage students to improve writing skill.
8. The students of preparatory program do not write confidently in English.
9. The preparatory year program does not provide an effective syllabus to Saudi students at Imam Mohammed Bin Saud University. Thus, poor results in writing skill are a result of poor syllabus design.

4. Writing sessions should be given sufficient time to practice using different writing skills

REFERENCES :

- Harmer, J. (2004) How to teach Writing Cambridge university press.p84.
1. Harmer, J. (1988) The Practice of English Language Teaching Cambridge University Press.p333.
 2. Jill and Charles Hadfield (2001)Simple Writing Activities Oxford university.p72.
 3. Graham, S. (2012) Teaching Elementary School To Be Effective Writers. State university press .p7.



4. Crème, P.(2008) Writing at university Open University Press p2.
5. Harmer, J. (1991) The Practice of English Language Teaching Cambridge university press . p7&8.

6. Spratt,M.(2011)Teaching Knowledge Test. Cambridge University press .(6)p41.
7. Scrivener,J.(2005)Learning Teaching. Macmillan p116.