

An Assessment of the written performance of the Sudanese English as a foreign language university learners: A communicative approach to writing

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ABSTRACT: This study investigated the written performance of the Sudanese English as a foreign language (EFL) students. The study aims to assess the written texts produced by the students in order to find out how successful they are in their use of writing as a mechanism through which meaning is communicated. To achieve the aim of the study, the researcher employed the analytic descriptive method. The subject of the study consisted of 65 Sudanese EFL teachers drawn from some Sudanese universities and 240 fourth level students who were taking English as their major in five Sudanese universities. Three tools were used for data collection: writing test, two questionnaires (one for the teachers and the other for the students) and an interview with the students. By using the statistical program SPSS, the study revealed that Sudanese EFL students did not possess the ability to cope with the different modes of writing. This makes them unable to develop an understanding of how to employ the linguistic, cultural and social knowledge to develop an idea into a meaningful and comprehensive written text. The study also showed that students were not able to depend on the strategies of writing so that they could produce texts which stimulate readers and keep their attention. Furthermore, the study revealed that the students were not prepared to benefit from their teachers and peers while they are writing; they never asked for advice or any clarification but did their writing individually. Moreover, the study has reached the conclusion that the students' inability to know what the readers know and what they want represents one of the factors that lead students to produce less informative written texts. The study concluded that the poor communicative competence the students possess stems from different factors: (1) the instruction the students received in writing did not revolve around the issues that enable them to develop their abilities as writers, (2) the students were not motivated enough to exert efforts and seek opportunities to engage into deliberate writing and intensive reading so that they can promote their writing abilities, (3) the environment in which writing is done did not enhance and foster students' ability to create writing which is sophisticated and communicative in nature, (4) teachers also did not encourage these students to view writing as a mechanism through which meaning is negotiated, and (5) the sorts of feedback these students received on their writing do not contribute to the development of students' writing proficiency. To help the students develop their writing skills, teachers should help the students be knowledgeable about the different modes of writing and be knowledgeable about the lexical and grammatical structures required by each mode. Teachers also need to help the students develop the linguistic skills they need in the process of writing so that they can produce effective and comprehensive written texts.

KEYWORDS: *Communicative writing, audience awareness, organizational skills, instructive feedback,*

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a complex cognitive process which, as stated by Hazel ⁽¹⁾, does not arise out of a vacuum: there is always a process involved. Such process requires students to have linguistic and writing skills which enable them to produce, as proposed by Deane et al. ⁽²⁾, a wide range of texts for a variety of purposes, across a broad class of social contexts.

Kellogg ⁽³⁾ points out that learning how to write a coherent, effective text is difficult and protracted achievement of cognitive development. To write an extended text at an advanced level involves not just the language system. It poses significant challenges to our cognitive systems for memory and thinking well.

Elbow ⁽⁴⁾ reports that writing calls on two different skills that usually conflict with each other: creating and criticizing. In other words, writing calls on the ability to create words and ideas out of yourself, but it also calls on the ability to criticize them in order to decide which ones to use. When you begin to realize how writing calls on the opposite skills of creativity and critical thinking you get better understanding of its difficulty.

Sudanese EFL students do not appreciate the complexity associated with the process of writing. They also fail to employ their cognitive abilities in order to create ideas for their writing. The students do not have the ability to criticize the ideas they succeed to gather so that they can select the ones which serve their present purpose. That is why the writing produced by these students is always less informative and less sophisticated. In this study the researcher investigated the performance of the Sudanese EFL students at university level.

The study precisely investigated students' writing habits to see if they have the ability to write texts which are communicative in nature. It assesses students' writing skill to find out if the students are able to develop a particular topic into a meaningful thought. So this study tackles the writing problems of the students in terms of discussing the factors which are thought to affect the development of students' writing skill. The students represent the future practitioners of the English language in the Sudanese society. So, investigating their learning habits is believed to be with great value in the field of education.

Research in English as a Secondary language (ESL/EFL) Writing

Writing, in the traditional approaches to language teaching and learning, was considered as a secondary and not so important skill. That is why it received little attention in comparison with speaking, reading and listening. Leki, ⁽⁵⁾, Matsuda, ^(6,7) and Silva, ⁽⁸⁾, claim that the central teaching method during the 1950s put undue focus on oral rather than written proficiency. Theories such as those incorporated in the audiolingual method dominated the pedagogy of ESL classes especially in 1950s and early 1960s. So writing was not given much emphasis in the learning syllabus. Accordingly, little attention has been paid to the development of the students' EFL writing abilities. Part of the problem, according to Camps ⁽⁹⁾, lies in the fact that in many EFL contexts, such as in Spain, there is no a solid tradition in the teaching of L1 writing skills, whose learning has been often left to the students themselves. Most of the books in the field

of EFL/ESL concerned with developing students' speaking, listening and reading abilities, but not with developing writing. This is confirmed by Kress⁽¹⁰⁾, who states that the number of books on the learning of reading is vast; by contrast there are few books on the learning of writing.

The situation did not remain as such for a long time. In the early 1960s, as reported by Fujieda⁽¹¹⁾, large numbers of foreign students entered higher education in the U.S. At this stage, L1 composition instructors perceived major differences in writing between L1 and L2 learners. These differences rekindled interest in teaching writing to non-native speakers. Along with this a consideration of pedagogical approaches to L2 learners developed. The differences of teaching writing between native and non-native speakers resulted in controversial issues. Writing teachers became critical about how to teach writing in English to ESL learners. Matsuda^(12, 13) argued that writing pedagogy is divided into L1 and L2 issues to draw a division between composition studies and L2 studies.

Since writing is a very important element in the continuum of proper literacy, it needs to be treated in such a way that enables students to better express their thoughts through the written form of language. Unless teachers and EFL/ESL experts appreciate the importance of writing, no progress will be achieved in this respect. Of course, the job of teachers and EFL/ESL experts is to consider this fact. Matsuda claims that writing should imply an advanced and extensive language technique. Learners also need to be well-prepared so that they can deal with writing properly. Leki⁽⁵⁾ adds that learners are required to have fundamental knowledge to produce full composition with paragraphs.

1- Studies on Coherence and Cohesion

Previous research has shown that EFL/ESL students experience serious difficulties in the composing process. One of these difficulties is how to produce a well-connected and coherent piece of writing. In order to help students understand the importance of producing a unified and solid piece of writing many researchers conducted studies in this respect. Abdellah⁽¹⁴⁾, for example, found that the Sudanese university students were not able to make correct use of written discourse properties, which eventually reduce the overall writing quality. He also found that the average student's writing was characterized by a variety of coherence breaks whether in terms of misleading paragraph division or irrelevance. This result coincides with Olatejo's⁽¹⁵⁾ findings, who found that the Nigerian ESL students lacked competence in their use of cohesive devices. This made their writing appear not understandable. He added that the students were not able to use cohesive devices despite the instruction they received on English for six years.

Further investigation of the findings of Olatejo⁽¹⁵⁾ revealed that the researcher himself stated that the students were not exposed to the essentials of the English language. As such, the students were not to be blamed for their failure to use cohesive devices properly. To overcome this problem, the findings of the related studies suggest explicit instruction on the use of cohesive devices.

Castro⁽¹⁶⁾ suggested that second language students with shared socio-cultural backgrounds utilize similar linguistic and textual resources in writing. As for Neunier⁽¹⁷⁾ both good and poor students made the same use of cohesive devices; there were no significant differences in the students' use of these items. It is well known that good students are more successful

than poor students in achieving the goals of writing. It does not make sense that students possess the same skills in their performance in certain language area. Even among good students there are differences that one should account when discussing students' treatment of a particular item. Studies also reveal that some students avoid the use of cohesive devices in writing and others overuse them. This makes their writing appear awkward. Part of the reasons behind the difficulties the students suffer in this respect resides in the teachers' ignorance of the importance of coherence and cohesion. Therefore the studies recommend that teachers should first appreciate the importance of coherence and cohesion and then endeavor to raise students' awareness of these aspects when writing in English.

Studies on Writing Strategies

Adopting strategies necessary for producing appropriate written texts is one of the challenges that EFL students face. The success in adopting the right writing strategies is an important step Towards producing texts which are communicative in nature. So, instruction in writing strategies needs to meet these challenges so that the students can succeed in producing effective texts. Therefore, this section gives a brief review of a number of studies done in the field of writing strategies.

El Abed ⁽¹⁸⁾ showed that no significant differences in writing quantity and quality among the students who write with prewriting activities and those who write without these activities. But it is obvious that any prewriting activity can result in good writing quality. Zhang and Vukelich ⁽¹⁹⁾ proved that the students who write Previous studies also reveal that the inadequacy of the methods adopted in teaching writing can negatively influence EFL learners composing

with prewriting activities perform better than the students who write without prewriting activity. Another study which deals with prewriting activities is by Pishghadam and Ghanizadeh ⁽²⁰⁾. The study investigates the impact of concept mapping as a prewriting activity on Iranian EFL learners' writing ability in terms of product and process of writing. The study reveals that concept mapping enhances students' writing ability. The students who engage in prewriting activities before writing seem to be good in L2 writing. Sasaki ⁽²¹⁾ found that expert writers always engage in different prewriting activities before starting to write. Novice writers do not devote time for planning and that is why they fail to make a global plan. Sasaki ⁽²¹⁾ also showed that after making their global plan, the experts did not stop and think as frequently as the novices did.

Studies on Students' Writing Competence

Previous research in this regard has proved that the students' lack of knowledge in terms of basic writing principles is one of the factors that negatively influence students' writing. Maria ⁽²²⁾ found that Bulgarian EFL Students fail to write because they lack conscious knowledge about the complexity of writing as a cognitive task. As for Ahmed ⁽²³⁾ the source of the difficulties the Sudanese students encounter in writing is due to their poor writing background, mother tongue interference and strategies the students adopt in writing. Many reasons can be thought of in this respect; for example, the objectives and goals of students' writing and how it is planned to achieve these objectives and goals can also lead to writing problems.

process. For example, Fallahzadeh and Shokrpour ⁽²⁴⁾ reported that part of the problem the Iranian students experience in writing refers to the classes and

methods of teaching and to students' low knowledge of vocabulary and lack of motivation. Another study in this regard is by Ezza ⁽²⁵⁾ who reported that the English Departments in the Arab universities adopted approaches and materials dated back to the 1940s and 1950s. For Kalikoha ⁽²⁶⁾ Malawian first-year students find it very challenging to obtain sufficient and relevant source text information, and use an appropriate academic writing style. The researcher concluded that essay writing is challenging for first year undergraduates due to the lack of thorough instruction and timely training in essay writing. The problem the students encounter selecting the relevant content to use in writing is not restricted to the students of a particular level at the university. All students can find it challenging to obtain sufficient information while writing if they do not receive intensive instruction in this respect. Kalikoha ⁽²⁶⁾ mentioned that the students failed to adopt effective academic style in writing. This, of course, depends on the students' metacognitive knowledge and the nature of the instruction they receive regarding the use of academic style in writing.

Researchers suggest that the first step to help the students improve their writing skill is to encourage the students to develop positive attitude towards writing. Other researchers suggest that the students should lead into peer and group discussion. Teachers and programme designers can consider these suggestions in order to help the students promote the quality of their writing.

MATERIALS and METHODS

The Participants

The participants in this study included 65 EFL teachers and 240 students at some Sudanese universities. The students belong to Kassala University, Gadaref University, the Red Sea University, Omdurman Islamic University and Omdurman Ahlia

University. The participants were chosen due to the fact that teachers play a very important role in promoting and developing students' writing skills in particular and learning in general. Students were chosen due to the nature of the research questions and hypotheses which address students' communicative competence in writing.

Data Collection

The data of this study were collected through a test, two questionnaires, and an interview. The test and the interview were made for the students chosen as a sample for the present study. One of the two questionnaires was designed for the teachers and the other for EFL learners

Results and Discussion

1- Students' Writing Proficiency Analysis of the results of the teachers' questionnaires (Table 1) revealed that most of the Sudanese EFL students are unable to distinguish between different modes of the written discourse. Analysis also showed that the Sudanese EFL students are unable to think of the readers while they are planning for the writing task producing texts with different genres. The result obtained in the actual writing of the students support teachers' view that the students possess poor writing proficiency and that the students are not able to make the right rhetorical choices to influence their readers. This makes the students fail to produce the sort of texts that stimulate readers and . That is, they are unable to make assumptions about what the readers already know about the topic (what they take for granted) or what these readers wish to find as new. But the students stated that they knew the type of writing; and that they knew the language content required keeping attention.

The texts the students produce are linguistically strange and incomplete.

So, the data obtained from the target teachers and the actual performance of the students support the hypothesis that the discourse of the students

under study is incomplete and therefore less informative.

Table 1. Teachers' evaluation of the students' writing proficiency

No	Item	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Median
1	Most of the Sudanese EFL students are unaware of the fact that each type of writing has its own unique set of rhetorical choices.	27.7%	49.2%	10.8%	12.3%	.	2
		18	32	7	8	.	
2	Sudanese EFL students fail to appreciate the social context in which discourse is used by users of the target language.	21.5%	49.2%	16.9%	10.8%	1.5%	2
		14	32	11	7	1	
3	Most of the Sudanese EFL students lack the ability to plan their writing with the audience in their minds.	29.2%	49.2%	15.4%	6.2%	.	2
		19	32	10	4	.	
4	The majority of the Sudanese EFL students are unable to develop evaluation and reformulation strategies as part of their writing process.	33.8%	36.9%	18.5%	10.8%	.	2
		22	24	12	7	.	
5	Sudanese EFL students' poor linguistic knowledge makes them unable to develop a particular topic into a unified and coherent text.	33.8%	36.9%	7.7%	20.0%	1.5%	2
		22	24	5	13	1	
6	Sudanese EFL students ignore the role of cohesion in achieving the link between ideas.	23.1%	38.5%	18.5%	16.9%	3.1%	2
		15	25	12	11	2	
7	The stress of trying to write perfectly negatively influences students' writing.	20.0%	36.9%	26.2%	15.4%	1.5%	2
		13	24	17	10	1	

2- students writing Motivation

To discuss teachers view on the students motivation to write, items of the following (Table2) will be discussed. Responses to the items in table1 above show that Sudanese EFL students are not enthusiastic enough to benefit from the presence of their teachers or peers while they are

performing the writing task. This makes the students miss the of evaluating and re-evaluating the ideas they develop when writing. However, the students report that they are committed to their writing to the extent that they seek opportunities to engage in reading authentic materials.

The students also assume that they engage in different sorts of deliberate writing in order to develop their writing skill. But by investigating the students' writing, one will realize that this assumption is not true.

Table 2 Teachers' assessment of students' writing motivation

No	Item	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Median
8	Sudanese EFL writers never seek help from their teachers or their peers when generating and developing ideas relevant to their topics.	18.5%	35.4%	10.8%	32.3%	3.1%	2
		12	23	7	21	2	
9	Most of the Sudanese EFL writers are reluctant in their writing assuming that it is a tiresome and complicated process.	20.0%	52.3%	10.8%	16.9%	.	2
		13	34	7	11	.	
10	Sudanese EFL writers never exert themselves to search for opportunities to engage in a productive act of written communication.	26.2%	43.1%	13.3%	12.3%	4.6%	2
		17	28	9	8	3	
11	Most of the Sudanese EFL writers never attempt to study authentic materials in order to observe how written discourse is structured by users of the target language.	26.2%	47.7%	6.2%	18.5%	1.5%	2
		17	31	4	12	1	
12	The nature of the materials used in EFL writing courses does not encourage the Sudanese EFL writers to get involved in a fruitful act of writing.	27.7%	35.4%	13.8%	20.0%	3.1%	2
		18	23	9	13	2	

3- EFL Writing Syllabus

The role of writing syllabus in the development or deterioration of the students' writing abilities according to teachers evaluation is enlisted in table 3. Statistical analysis suggests that the majority of the teachers confirmed that the writing materials in most of the Sudanese universities were not based on the types of the activities that lead the students to access the knowledge of what is socially and culturally expected by users of the target language. This confirms the hypothesis that the writing syllabus in most of the Sudanese universities does not meet students' writing needs.

improve their writing abilities. Teacher need to develop positive attitudes towards students' writing so

4- Writing Instructors

The following table exposes teachers' evaluation of the role played by the writing instructors in developing students' writing competence:

The statistical analysis of the items 13-17 and item 19 are positive (Table 3) which means that the responses confirmed the hypothesis that writing needs are to be taken as a means of developing students' communicative writing. Furthermore, the analysis indicates that teachers are expected to help the students

that they can guide their students to produce writing which stimulates readers and keep their attention.

Table 3. Teachers' evaluation of the writing courses

No	Item	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Median
13	EFL writing courses do not guide students to visualize how a piece of writing establishes its communicative purpose.	24.6%	38.5%	13.8%	21.5%	1.5%	2
		16	25	9	14	1	
14	The teaching of writing defines texts as a regular arrangement of grammatical units and sentences.	9.2%	46.2%	9.2%	32.3%	3.1%	2
		6	30	6	21	2	
15	EFL writing courses should be based on the activities that make students know what is expected socially and culturally by users of the target language.	43.1%	44.6%	4.6%	6.2%	.	2
		28	29	3	4	.	
16	EFL writing syllabus lack the sort of the activities that raise students' genre awareness.	27.7%	49.2%	7.7%	12.3%	3.1%	2
		18	32	5	8	2	
17	The activities incorporated in the writing syllabus do not develop students' awareness of the English rhetorical modes of writing.	23.1%	46.2%	13.8%	13.8%	3.1%	2
		15	30	9	9	2	
18	The writing materials must treat rhetorical and stylistic conventions of writing seriously in order to meet Sudanese EFL writers' communicative needs.	52.3%	44.6%	1.5%	1.5%	.	1
		34	29	1	1	.	
19	EFL writing courses should focus on the situational and contextual features of the written texts.	58.5%	35.4%	6.2%	.	.	1
		38	23	4	.	.	

Table 4. Teachers' opinion of the role of writing instructors in developing students' writing abilities

No	Item	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Median
20	Instructors should help students access a number of grammatical resources which could help them improve their writing competence.	58.5%	40.0%	.	1.5%	.	1
		38	26	.	1	.	
21	Most of the Sudanese writing instructors do not focus on the discourse features that contribute to the production of unified and coherent texts.	23.1%	46.2%	13.8%	16.9%	.	2
		15	30	9	11	.	
22	Most of the teachers never exert themselves to improve their understanding of how to view students as writers.	29.2%	46.2%	1.5%	23.1%	.	2
		19	30	1	15	.	
23	Many of the Sudanese teachers do not attempt to guide students towards a conscious awareness of how audience will interpret their writing.	24.6%	49.2%	4.6%	20.0%	1.5	2
		16	32	3	13	1	
24	Teachers need to develop more serious attitudes towards writing if they wish to raise students' awareness of the communicative value of texts.	53.8%	41.5%	3.1%	1.5%	.	1
		35	27	2	1	.	
25	Writing instructors never encourage their students to take writing as a means of expressing meaning.	20.0%	27.7%	13.8%	38.5%	.	3
		13	18	9	25	.	
26	Teachers should encourage students to focus on the whole text rather than on individual sentences while they are writing.	50.8%	38.5%	1.5%	4.6%	4.6%	1
		33	25	1	3	3	

Students' organizational skills

The students stated that they were able to adopt different strategies during their process of writing. This ability, according to the students' view point, helped them produce writing which is coherent and well

organised. However, the students' actual performance does not support this statement.

The students' inability to produce more organized and unified pieces of writing is revealed by data in table 5.

Table 5. Students' scores in the writing test

Scoring range	Frequency	Percentage
90 – 100	-	-
80 – 89	4	1.7%
70 – 79	8	3.3%
60 – 69	12	5.0%
50 – 59	18	7.5%
40 – 49	28	11.7%
30 – 39	48	20.0%
Less than 30	122	50.8%
Total	240	100.0%

Only **17.5%** of the subjects wrote texts which can be accepted. A high proportion of the students did not succeed to produce texts which are coherent and well organized. So, the students' actual written performance and teachers' responses to the questionnaire make it obvious that the writing of the Sudanese students is not well unified or organized. Nevertheless, the students think that their writing is well connected and coherent. The following extracts (1-4) represent a good example of the students' writing:

Extract 1: There are many people left their contrise for many reasons: They suffering from. health – Education and civil war and poverty. they moved from growing countries to developing countries, they do not want to live in poverty and problems health, when they complainng about their problems. There isn't answer or reponed, all the responsibilities ignor them recurs.

Extract 2: Some people state that women should not work, I am do agree with theme because I believe table 6. Data analysis confirmed that the environment in which writing is performed, in most of the Sudanese universities, does not enable the students to recognize the sort of language functions they are likely to

that women they have no abilities to every work even if they have the ability to do it is not their responsibility, their responsibility is how to organise their houses.

Extract 3: For many reasons people can leave their countary although that is defcult for them but, as we know the development of the incom is the firstly important reson that guide people to leave their country particular in the develop country, that is most after they graduate from the university they think or know that the opportune to work inside their country is lemeted or fixed,so that they decided to leave their country.

Extract 4: Although all family works to justify their needs, women had a important role, because she helped her husband in the farm...

6- Writing Environment

The teachers' critical appraisal of the role played by writing environment in the development of the students' writing competence is depicted in

Accordingly, the writing environment in which Sudanese EFL students writing does not contribute to the development of their writing competence.

7- Teachers' Feedback

The role of feedback in developing the students' writing capacities as

appraised by teachers is shown in table 7.

Table 6. Teachers' evaluation of the role of writing environment in developing Students' written communicative competence

No	Item	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Median
27	The environment in which writing is done in most of the Sudanese universities does not reinforce the functional dimension of communication.	26.2%	55.4%	9.2%	7.7%	1.5%	2
		17	36	6	5	1	
28	Most of the writing is done at home as an assignment which means students miss the opportunity to exchange ideas with their peers.	41.5%	46.2%	3.1%	7.7%	1.5%	2
		27	30	2	5	1	
29	Some students do not have the academic advantage of teacher-students interaction because of the size of the class.	55.4%	41.5%	.	1.5%	1.5%	1
		36	27	.	1	1	
30	Writing environment should be turned into a dynamic scene of communication to help Sudanese EFL writers develop their written communicative competence.	47.7%	47.7%	1.5%	3.1%	.	2
		31	31	1	2	.	
31	EFL writing environment should guide the students to recognize the role of audience in the process of writing.	41.5%	47.7%	7.7%	3.1%	.	2
		27	31	5	2	.	
32	Teachers need to play the role of the audience during the process of writing.	35.4%	49.2%	4.6%	9.2%	1.5%	2
		23	32	3	6	1	
33	Teachers should dramatize all possible situations needed for an authentic act of writing.	40.0%	49.2%	6.2%	3.1%	1.5%	2
		26	32	4	2	1	

Table 7. Teachers' appraisal of the role of feedback in promoting students' writing quality

No	Item	Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Median
34	The absence of the instructive and supportive teacher's comments is one of the factors that affect students' writing negatively.	49.2%	46.2%	1.5%	3.1%	.	2
		32	30	1	2	.	
35	The feedback provided for the students should focus on idea development, clarity and coherence rather than grammar.	29.2%	49.2%	1.5%	20.0%	.	2
		19	32	1	2	.	
36	The methods and purpose of evaluators and evaluation procedures negatively affect the students' written communicative competence.	20.0%	50.8%	6.2%	21.5%	1.5%	2
		13	33	4	14	1	
37	Teachers' negative comments demotivate students and make them reluctant in their writing.	47.7%	33.8%	7.7%	7.7%	3.1%	2
		31	22	5	5	2	
38	Teachers' comments distract students and lead them away from the purpose of writing a particular text in their voices.	13.8%	35.4%	13.8%	30.8%	6.2%	3
		9	23	5	20	4	
39	Teachers' comments are worded in such a way that it is difficult for students to know exactly what they need to revise or correct.	15.4%	40.0%	15.4%	27.7%	1.5%	2
		10	26	10	18	1	
40	Text-specific comment is such a factor that plays a very important role in developing students' written communicative competence.	27.7%	53.8%	15.4%	3.1%	.	2
		18	35	10	2	.	
41	Peer correction can positively influence students writing.	33.8%	53.8%	7.7%	3.1%	1.5%	2
		22	35	5	2	1	
42	The comments provided by teachers should create motive for editing and promoting students' final versions.	60.0%	33.8%	4.6%	1.5%	.	1

Statistical analysis showed that the majority of the target teachers confirmed that the absence of instructive and supportive feedback on the students' writing is one of the factors that have negative impact on the development of the students' writing capacities. Statistical analysis also revealed that most of the teacher participants agreed that teachers' negative comments on the students' writing demotivate the students and make them reluctant in writing. This supports the hypothesis that the sort of the feedback Sudanese EFL learners receive on their writing does not help them promote their writing competence.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study reveal that the writing proficiency of the Sudanese university students is poor. The students ignore the basic skills required for communicative writing. This results in writing which is neither comprehensible nor informative. So the students need to be acquainted with authentic written materials so that they can observe how writing is used by the native speakers or other users of English. This helps the students develop their writing skill. The findings also showed that the students under study were unable to adopt effective writing strategies. Thus, writing instructors and syllabus designers should consider this issue when devising writing activities. Furthermore, the findings reflect the students' inability to provide data to support the ideas they develop when writing. The students fail to discuss the topic being talked about fluently and smoothly. The students' awareness of the features of connected written discourse should be considered in the instances of material design.

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