

EMPOWERING EFL LEARNERS THROUGH A NEEDS-BASED ACADEMIC WRITING COURSE DESIGN

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ABSTRACT: *Using needs analysis as a research methodology, this study attempted to design a 20 hour academic writing (AW) course for Level 2 Foundation Year Saudi EFL students. Needs analysis was based on a diagnostic test, structured questionnaires, and researcher's observation to obtain information on students' language and skills needs, profile, levels of motivation, and learning styles and preferences. The results showed that the students did not have the writing proficiency for producing longer compositions and, therefore, the course should focus on appropriate language systems and skills to help learners with writing paragraphs based on two rhetorical strategies: cause and effect; and exemplification. The course content provides for the appropriate language systems and skills as voiced by the students and needed for writing these two types of paragraphs. The study also points to a course evaluation strategy that can be used for validation and future use of the proposed course.*

KEYWORDS: Needs Analysis, Academic Writing, Form, Function, Discourse Features, Study Skills, Process Approach

INTRODUCTION

The present research was basically motivated by a gradually growing concern of the researcher about the effectiveness of the academic writing (AW) course for Foundation Year students in Saudi Arabia. The course design which had been based on a preset textbook did not respect students' learning needs, and this gap consistently reflected itself in classroom tasks, formative and summative assessment throughout the conduct of the course module. Since visible gaps were identified in the Stated Learning Objectives (SLOs), Learning Tasks (LTs), and Learning Assessment (LA), the researcher proposed to use needs analysis to design a writing course for the students which would cater for not only their actual and perceived learning needs but also provide a chance to measure the effectiveness of this hands-on experience for future practice.

Writing in EAP

EAP is a branch of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and caters for the academic needs of students and prospective professionals in an academic setting (Ypsilandis and Kantaridou, 2007). This is attempted by targeting specialized vocabulary, register, functions and structures (Wright, 1992) as well as academic study skills such as note-taking, and proof-reading etc. EAP courses are either pre-sessional or in-sessional and can be for general academic purposes (EGAP) or specific academic purposes (ESAP).

Nunan (2000 p.36) considers writing to be the most challenging skill for both the first language (L1) and the foreign/second (L2) learners; an activity which is not “natural” and needs explicit instruction in order for the people to know “how to write”. This demanding

nature of writing probably made Bjork and Raisanen (1997, p. 8) opine that writing should be included “in all university curricula not only because of its immediate practical application, i.e. as an isolated skill or ability, but because we believe that, seen from a broader perspective, writing is a thinking tool. It is a tool for language development, for critical thinking and, extension, for learning in all disciplines”. The multiplicity of learning outcomes linked with writing, thus, make it a complex skill. The complexity is embedded in its interactive nature that aims at communication between the writer and a distant and, in most cases, an unknown audience. Pilus (1993) refers to a number of constraints that anonymity of the audience puts on the writer who cannot use direct references, receive immediate feedback or respond to readers’ reaction via paralinguistic features. Writing then becomes a formidable challenge when, according to Bell and Burnby (1984) in Nunan (2000, p. 36) writers have to “demonstrate control of a number of variables...these include control of content, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling, and letter formation...the writer must be able to structure and integrate information into cohesive and coherent paragraphs and texts”. It can be inferred that writing is a complex process comprising of many sub-processes such as planning, collecting data, drafting, revising and editing. Zamil (1983) opines that these sub-processes are dynamic, non-sequential and interactive. Not only this, these sub-processes are the outcome of interplay among the metacognitive, cognitive, linguistic, and socio-cultural paradigms.

Traditionally, L2 writing pedagogy had been content with teaching discrete linguistic skills at the sentence level (Kepner, 1991) ignoring, if not absolutely, to a great extent the discourse elements which make up a meaningfully negotiable text (Lee: 1996). This could partially be due to the institutional constraints dictated by syllabus design and textbook choices, and partly due to the fact that teaching discrete items on writing course can give a more easily measurable account of the teaching and learning outcomes as compared to a discourse-motivated writing course.

It was, however, not until the second half of the 20th century that the focus shifted from the sentence to the “text” as a unit of language (Ezza, 2010). This change in the pedagogic approach was due in part to the developments in linguistic theory influenced by theorists like Hymes (1972), Grice (1975), Halliday and Hassan (1976) etc. that introduced linguistic, situational, and social-cultural context as crucial variables in the process of writing, and thereby, in the creation of discourse (Ezza, 2010). Text linguistics, as the new analysis of writing was dubbed, proposed the notions of texture (Halliday and Hassan, 1976) and standards of textuality (Beaugrande and Dressler, 1981) which were, in fact, benchmarks for distinguishing texts from non-texts. In other words, it is texture that separates a text from a non-text (Halliday and Hasan, 1976).

Another important and relevant development in this context is the introduction of genre theory which from academic point of view aims at enabling the students “to realize that they are acquiring the disciplinary discourse associated with their subject fields. This type of language awareness is proposed to inform of who the language users are ... and whom they want to be identified with and, importantly, who they don’t want to be identified with” (Hewings et al, 2007 p.243).

Academic writing (AW) which is an integral component of academic discourse is distinct from general and other forms of writing in being need based, goal oriented, genre focused, and thereby, formal (Bowker, 2007). She suggests that AW employs full verb forms rather than contractions, tentative rather than categorical statements, an impersonal style,

nominalizations etc. It strictly adheres to the rules of punctuation and grammar, formal structure/format, and citations of published authors. L2 writers are expected to have the ability to employ suitable language skills and language systems to produce genre-specific academic texts in an appropriate style.

AW in Saudi Arabia shares most of the global features evident in EFL academic settings as well as presents its own peculiarities quite akin to other Arab EFL contexts. AW of Saudi students has revealed problems not only at the lexico-grammatical level but also at the discourse level (Al-Hozaimi, 1993; Al-Semari, 1993; Aljamhour, 1996). As a result, their texts do not show characteristics of a cohesive and coherent text which can be comprehensively interpreted by the readers.

In Saudi Arabia, six years of English language exposure in primary, intermediate and secondary schools forms a context for writing though practiced at a very limited level. Normally, the students are taught lexico-grammar for sentence construction, and controlled writing gradually progressing to semi-controlled and free writing activities. But this is mostly restricted to paragraph level production. At the higher level of education, tertiary or university, students are set to produce, both as classroom and assessment activity, a variety of writing genre such as expository, narrative, and argumentative essays, formal letters (inter-office, intra-office, and business), emails, research reports, dissertations, research articles, and translations of Arabic text (Jahin, 2012, Al-Hazmi and Scholfield, 2007).

AW writing courses at the Foundation Year level are obligatory for all students entering university, and almost all are based on published textbooks. The course outline is, in fact, derived from the contents and units of the book, and that is the reason majority of the writing courses do not represent students' real writing needs in a university context. This dilemma not only hampers development of the students' writing skill for the target module but also for their future academic needs that become evident as they take specialist subjects after completing the Foundation Year Programme. It was in this context that the researcher used needs analysis as a research methodology to ascertain the real needs of the students and then use the results to design a 20 hour writing course for Level 2 of the Foundation Year students.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher adopted mixed-methods approach which while empirically grounded in theories is believed to be flexible approach as it resorts to both qualitative and quantitative paradigms and welcomes critical opinions on educational processes and practices (Brown, 2004). More specifically, needs analysis framework was used to gather data which were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively to identify the writing needs of the target population. These included *learner profile*, *structured questionnaires*, *diagnostic test*, and *researcher's observation* as a teacher of academic writing. The study was triangulated with the expectation that this approach would unveil valid and reliable results on the academic writing needs of Saudi EFL students.

Needs analysis

Needs analysis is a process of establishing *what* and *how* of a course (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). Hutchinson and Waters (1987) identify needs as *necessities*, *lacks*, and *wants*. *Necessities* refer to the knowledge learners need to perform effectively in the target situation.

Lacks are the gaps between the present proficiency and the target proficiency of the students. *Wants* are about what the learners feel they need. So, an EAP course designer must be attentive to these issues while selecting materials and methodology (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). The researcher used a Diagnostic test (Appendix 1) to obtain information on *necessities* and *lacks*, and three Questionnaires (Appendix 2, 3, 4) to identify *wants*,

Learner profile

The learner group comprised of fifteen monolingual Foundation Year Arab students at the English Language Center (ELC), Yanbu Colleges & Institutes, Saudi Arabia aged 18 to 21 from a homogeneous cultural background. They joined this course after passing Semester 1 of the Foundation Year with at least 60 per cent marks. This ten week (two hours a week/20 hours in all) Academic Writing 2 (ENG 002) course was designed to enable students write paragraphs for academic purposes using cause and effect and exemplification as rhetorical strategies. The course design also included academic skills as identified in needs analysis to support the writing process.

Questionnaires

The researcher used questionnaire 1 (Appendix 5) to gather information on student and group profile, questionnaire 2 (Appendix 2) to identify students' language and skill needs for the writing course, questionnaire 3 (Appendix 3) to measure students' levels of motivation, and questionnaire 4 (Appendix 4) adapted from Bowles (2008) to identify the learning styles and preference of the students.

Diagnostic Test

The researcher used a diagnostic test (Appendix 1) which was based on a five-paragraph composition on any one of the given topics for the following three reasons:

- To identify students' strengths and weaknesses in AW such as grammar, lexis, text organization, content knowledge, and task completion.
- To find out students' familiarity with different types of essays as they will be writing narrative, descriptive, and argumentative essays in the upcoming semesters.
- To decide whether the students have the writing ability to be taught essay writing skills or it will be appropriate to start with paragraph writing.

Observation

As course teacher and coordinator on this course, the researcher also made use of personal observation and experiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

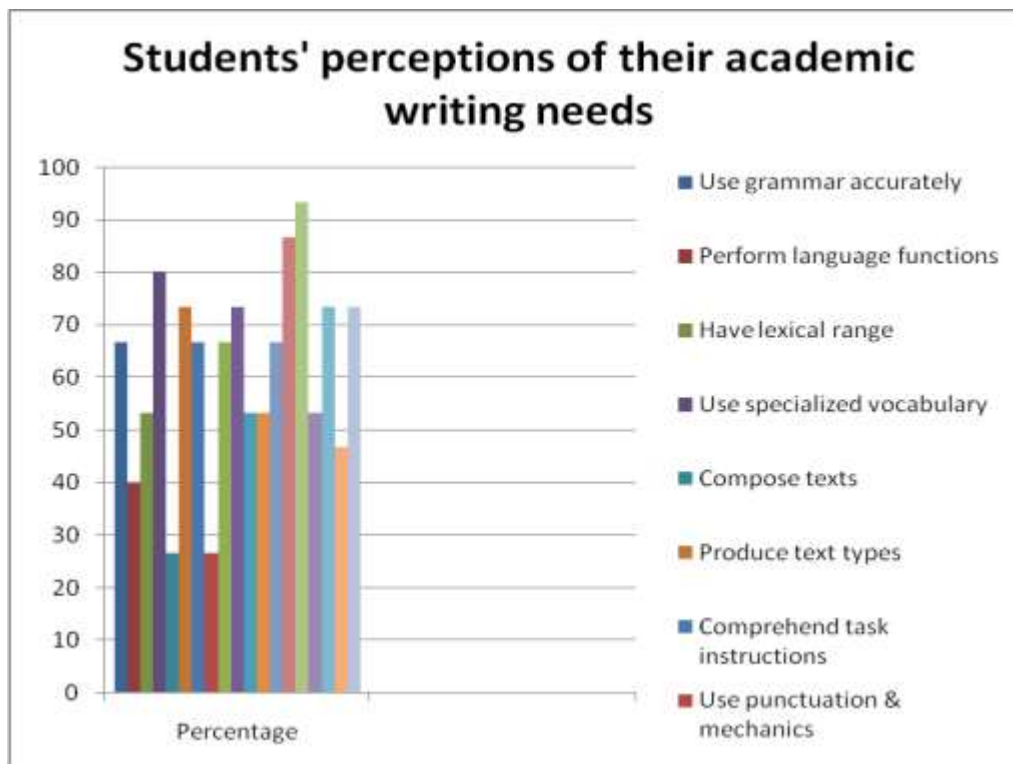
The data collected from learners' responses helped to derive the following conclusions as to their AW needs, learning styles and preferences, and levels of motivation:

Students' perceptions of their academic writing needs

The results obtained from the questionnaire (Graph 1) did not fully collate with that of the diagnostic test for instance, the students' belief that they could use grammar correctly both for sentence structuring and communicative functions was not demonstrated in the diagnostic test. Similarly, their vocabulary was limited to nouns and verbs mostly while they believed that they could use a certain lexical range to perform their academic tasks.

However, some of the results of the questionnaire matched with those of the diagnostic test for example, practicing grammar for a variety of language functions. In addition, the students felt the need for instruction in how to write paragraphs and longer compositions, development of logical argument (text structure/coherence), editing, punctuation, and mechanics (grammatical accuracy and text organization), and the use of library for reading and referencing.

Graph 1: Students' perceptions of their academic writing needs

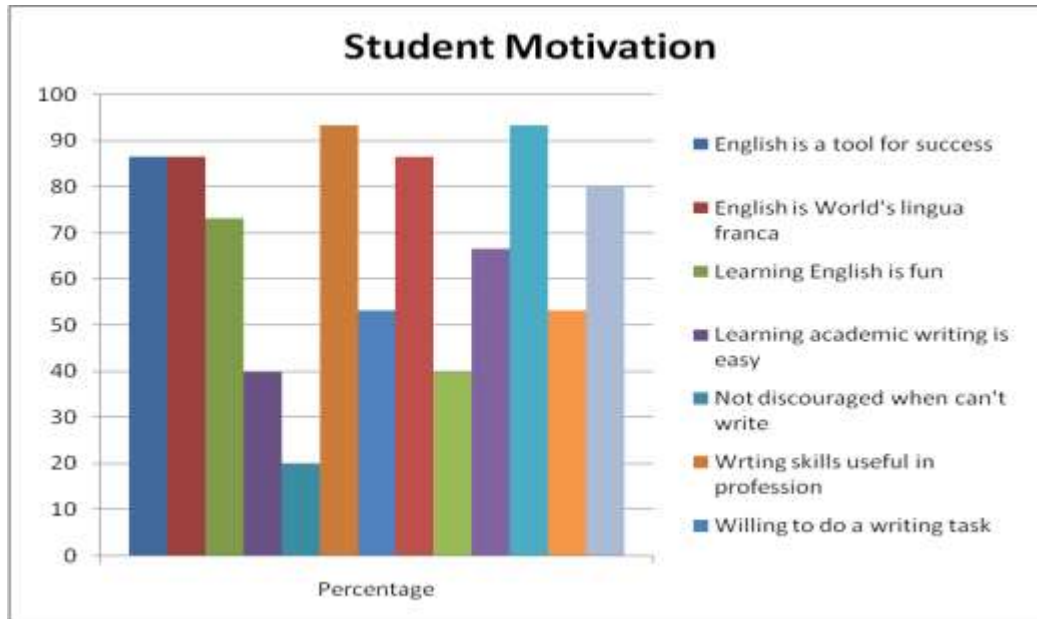


**Percent Agree (%) = Agree & Strongly Agree Responses combined*

Motivation among students

The majority of the students showed instrumental motivation (Graph 2) for they wanted to learn academic writing to do this course or to go abroad for higher studies. But, in the questionnaire on motivation the students considered English language very important for success in academic and professional life, and for international communication (integrative motivation). They felt motivated when encouraged by the family, teachers, and peers.

Graph 2: Student motivation

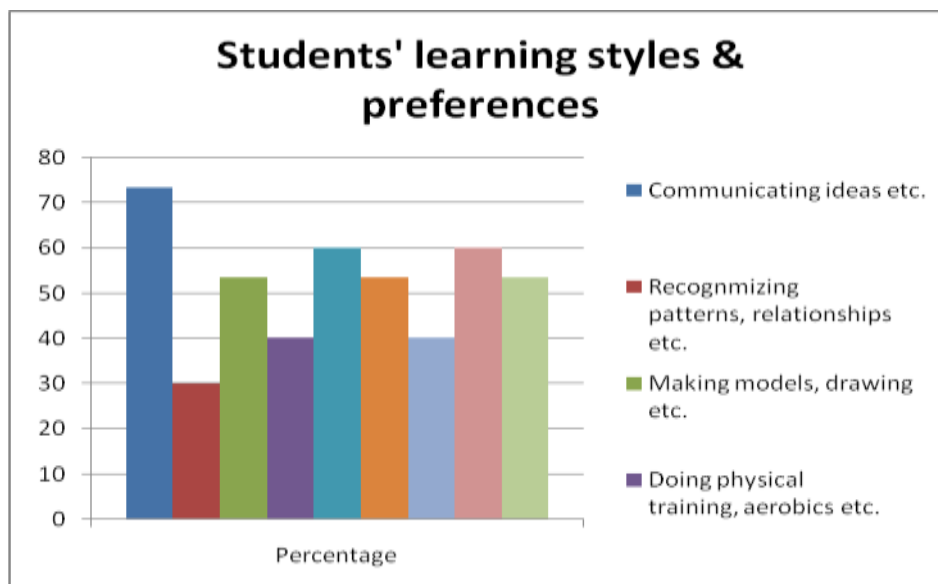


**Percent Agree (%) = Agree & Strongly Agree Responses combined*

Learning styles and preferences

The data revealed (Graph 3) that majority of the students (73.33%) have linguistic intelligence which implied that the course design should prioritize language content in a student-centered classroom so as to respect students' learning preferences.

Graph 3: Student learning styles



**Percent Agree (%) = Agree & Strongly Agree Responses combined*

Adapted from: Bowles T, Australian Journal of Educational & Developmental Psychology. Vol 8, 2008, pp 15-26

Diagnostic Test

The results of the diagnostic test (Appendix 6) showed that the students have problems in grammar such as subject-verb agreement, verb forms, and nouns; sentence structure for example, parallelism and sentence fragments; discourse features like pronoun reference and signal words; supporting detail for instance, pre-writing strategies for generating ideas as well as using exemplification for idea development; and spelling. A high instance of errors reflects students' inability to edit for correction.

The diagnostic test was a random five paragraph composition on any one of the given topics (a narrative, a descriptive, and an argumentative) in sixty minutes time to enable the researcher gauge grammatical accuracy, text organization, and task completion so that clear assumptions about students' writing ability could be made.

Fifteen samples were collected and then analyzed on the set criteria (Appendix 6). The results showed that there were seven task completions (a five paragraph essay) out of a total of fifteen. The two better attempts were on the argumentative topic and the remaining thirteen essays were on the descriptive topic. None attempted the narrative topic.

These writing samples revealed the following information about students' strengths and weaknesses in writing for academic purposes:

- **Strengths**

- ✓ The students were familiar with the notion of the topic sentence and produced syntactically and semantically acceptable sentences (57 in all) for most of the paragraphs they attempted.
- ✓ The students wrote introductions suitable to their level of language proficiency. They made sense although they could not develop good thesis statements for the introduction.
- ✓ The students attempted simple, compound, and complex sentences; noun, and prepositional phrases; and also made use of the coordinators and subordinators.
- ✓ Despite limited subject matter on the supporting details, the students maintained coherence as well as cohesion. The paragraphs do not show digressions from the topic stated in the topic sentence. However, the paragraphs do not show a wide range of cohesive devices and were limited to the use of signal words only.
- ✓ There was a range of academic vocabulary. Nouns and verbs occurred more frequently than adjectives and adverbs.

- **Weaknesses**

- ✓ The most prominent weakness that appeared was that of the spelling (123 mistakes).
- ✓ There were 24 punctuation mistakes mostly in the use of the period, comma, and the question mark.
- ✓ Grammatical errors in the use of subject-verb agreement (23 errors), verb tense and aspect (26 errors), nouns (18 errors), pronouns (9 errors) were the most frequent.

- ✓ The students could not write thesis statement for the introductory paragraph. Its low incidence showed that the students were not familiar with the notion of the thesis statement and confused it with the topic sentence.
- ✓ The paragraphs lack in supporting detail. There was not sufficient evidence to show that students could use cause and effect; comparison and contrast; facts and statistics; and exemplification as strategies for writing supporting sentences.
- ✓ The paragraphs also did not show appropriate use of the transitions. The students dwell only on the use of time-order signal words like “first”, and “then”.

Implications of the diagnostic test on the course design:

Since eight students could not write a complete five-paragraph essay and the remaining five were lacking in suitable detail, it suggested that they were unable to provide logical detail/support for the topic/main idea. So, it was inferred that it would be better for the students to first develop their paragraph writing skills before moving on to longer compositions. To start with, the course should include cause and effect, and exemplification as the two most commonly used strategies for adding detail in academic writing and are equally practiced in different genres like narration, description, exposition, and argumentation. Moreover, It would be appropriate to start with the traditional sentence pattern and provide students further practice in coordination and subordination. It was also assumed that adopting the process approach to writing and using controlled practice leading to free writing would be more effective for low proficiency students. Therefore, the course design would include pre-writing tasks like brainstorming, controlled writing with prompts, and post writing activities like editing for accuracy. Practice in study skills and grammar would be included to enhance the learning opportunities for the learners.

Course proposal

In the light of the results obtained from the needs analysis instruments on the *necessities*, *lacks*, and *wants*, this Preparatory Year Level 2 academic writing course will progress from controlled practice to free writing. The needs analysis demonstrates that learners need to develop their accuracy in writing as the first priority. The focus will be on paragraphs based on cause and effect, and exemplification, because these are easier than the other types like argumentation and exposition and, secondly because these two types are extensively used in academic contexts. In terms of *necessities*, the course should target both fluency and accuracy in writing for study purposes. However, keeping their *lacks* in mind, the course would be restricted to the teaching of grammatical accuracy for paragraph development only. The students' perceptions of their *wants* did not fully match with the results of the diagnostic test. So, the teachers would need to make use of their own judgment to fill in the gaps. Finally, aspects of student motivation and learning preferences should also receive due consideration in methodology and materials.

Introduction to the course design

The course aims to meet the immediate and perceived academic needs of the students by targeting fluency and accuracy in writing paragraphs using the process approach to writing in order to help students write paragraphs like cause and effect, and exemplification. This will be supported by an interactive approach to ensure active student participation in the learning

process (Jordan: 1997) for practice in grammar, punctuation, spelling, text organization, and editing.

Course objectives

This course has been designed with **the aim** of *developing the academic writing skills of the students at the sentence and the supra-sentential (paragraph) level*. It will attempt to achieve the following objectives: (see Appendix7 for course mapping & delivery plan)

Upon successful completion of the course the students will be able to:	
1.	Write and evaluate the topic sentence for a paragraph by practicing how to identify the topic and the controlling idea.
2.	Write supporting sentences by employing strategies such as cause and effect, and exemplification.
3.	Restate the main point in the concluding sentence.
4.	Develop text structure by maintaining coherence and cohesion by using exemplification for coherence, and signal words for cohesion.
5.	Use grammar accurately for functional purposes focusing on subject-verb agreement, verb tense, nouns, parallelism and sentence fragments.
6.	Use punctuation, spelling, and mechanics correctly to achieve communicative effect.
7.	Adopt process approach to write cause and effect, and exemplification paragraphs.

Course mapping and administration

According to Jordan (1997 p.56), “A syllabus is a specification of *what* is to be included in a language course”. Methodology concerns about *how* to materialize these specifications. The researcher opted for a structural approach to focus on aspects of grammar like subject-verb agreement, verb tenses; and functional approach to focus on logical relationships and functions like cause and effect, and exemplification (Wilkins, 1976, Munby, 1978, Jordan, 1997). The process approach to writing was adopted because it involves step by step progression towards the development of writing skills and is especially effective for low proficiency EFL students such as the Saudi Foundation Year. Moreover, this course also provides the needed practice in the development of academic skills for writing. The students will practice how to generate and organize ideas as well as develop editing skills for error correction leading to accuracy and fluency. The students would be encouraged to take initiative in classroom activities whereby they could feel motivated enough to proceed on to a successful learning experience. For instance, deductive approach to teaching a grammar point can be used which can help the students infer the principle and the function by themselves. However, the teacher will need to conduct and monitor the classroom work either in pairs or in groups depending upon the teaching content and learning context. For example, group work can be used for problem solving activities such as using signal words to achieve cohesion in a paragraph or giving cohesion and coherence to a jumbled paragraph. Finally, the teacher can use teacher, peer, and self correction to provide feedback, again considering the situational factors, on the students’ performance.

Assessing learners' progress and achievements

The learners' progress will be assessed with the help of a number of assessment tools. To begin with, the results of the diagnostic test can be used and matched with the results of the first formative in-class assignment. It is suggested that the teachers make note of the outcomes thus received. This procedure will continue till the final summative test. This system will enable teachers to get a comprehensive picture of the students' progress. In addition, observations made on the self-assessment and peer-assessment activities will also guide teachers on the students' progress. Finally, the study proposes to collect students' perceptions on the overall effectiveness of the course and match them with the results obtained from the above-mentioned formative and summative tests and personal observation. It is expected that the findings will lead towards the evaluation of the whole programme and provide insights in regard to future planning.

Gaining insights for the future

According to Nunan and Lamb (1996), "Evaluation involves the collection and interpretation of information about teaching and learning for decision-making purposes." It is a broader term and encompasses the entire language programme rather than mere assessment of the students' performance (Brindley, 2006). In course evaluation, factors such as materials, classroom activities, out-of-class support, course design, methodology, and assessment should be evaluated (Mo, 2005). However, to evaluate everything relevant is unrealistic. Priorities should be set and the type and timing of data collection should be planned (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998).

The study recommends collecting data from three different sources: In the first instance, the teachers will identify any gaps that have been left in the realization of the course objectives. Are the students able to use grammar, punctuation, and study skills to produce a cohesive and coherent paragraph based on cause and effect, and exemplification? Secondly, the teachers will develop a questionnaire to collect students' perceptions on course materials, classroom activities, assessment procedures, and teaching methodology. Thirdly, the teachers will include their personal observations taken in the form of notes and students' results on formative and summative tests about the course design, teaching materials, students' performance and levels of motivation. The cumulative evaluation done will help to ascertain the extent to which the course has been successful, the changes that must be made while the course is in progress, and future planning to make the course more effective than before.

Limitations of the study

The study was based on a small sample size collected from one Saudi institution. Hence the results cannot be generalized especially, to non-Saudi or non-Arab contexts. Another limitation of this course is the short duration which has led to a focus on a limited set of sentence structures, discourse features, study skills, and paragraph types. Since the course will be intensive, the learning outcomes may not be as have been benchmarked in the course outline. Furthermore, the students may not get as much time as is required for practicing academic writing skills. Finally, teacher feedback on student performance in the class will also be subject to time constraints.

CONCLUSION

The course content (Appendix 7) is the logical corollary of the needs analysis results. This 20 hour academic writing course will expose learners to the process approach to writing and they will practice how to generate ideas, write, and edit for correction and improvement to write a cause and effect, and exemplification paragraph. Moreover, due focus will be given to form and function integrated into the overall course design. In addition, language study skills needed for the above-mentioned paragraphs will also be practiced. The course will be, in fact, an attempt to enable students develop their writing skills from controlled practice to free production. The learners will be learning what they think they should, and this will enhance their levels of motivation. AW which is generally considered difficult because of its formality and specific focus will no more be a burden since there will be selective focusing on form (verb use) and function (exemplification), discourse features (signal words), and study skills (editing). The integrative nature of the course content and student-centeredness will allow the students take responsibility of their own learning and thereby, ensure positive reinforcement. The students will also be able to make productive use of their previous knowledge and find the target activities doable. Since most of the students showed preference for the language content (Appendix 2), they will find the materials suitable to their learning styles. The process approach to writing will itself be a great thing to learn and practice. As the results of the diagnostic test (Appendix 6) show that majority of the students could not write sufficient detail to substantiate their point of view, the training in brainstorming and clustering will enable them use their cognitive faculties for the generation of ideas, and writing paragraphs using cause and effect, and exemplification will help them write logical detail. Finally, practicing editing skills will give them confidence which is essential for successful academic writing.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Academic Writing Diagnostic Test

Topic chosen (check one of the boxes):

A

B

C

Write a five-paragraph essay (introduction, body, and conclusion) on any of the following topics:

- A. *Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Parents are the best teachers. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.*
- B. *An interesting incident of my Life*
- C. *My College*

* **Make sure to provide...**

- a) An introduction that states a claim, or position statement,
- b) Three body paragraphs, each with different examples of evidence to support your position
- c) An appropriate topic sentence for each of the three supporting paragraphs
- d) A concluding paragraph that restates your claim and summarizes the main points as well as your opinion
- e) Accurate grammar, transitions, punctuations and correct spelling.

Appendix 2**Students' perceptions of their academic writing needs (with results)****I think I can** (tick whichever applicable):

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Rating	Percent Agree
use grammar to write correct sentences	---	1	4	8	2	3.75	66.66
use grammar for different language functions	---	4	5	5	1	3.75	40.00
use a variety of vocabulary to write effectively	---	2	5	5	3	3.75	53.33
also use specialized vocabulary to complete academic tasks	---	---	3	6	6	5.0	80.00
compose paragraphs and longer compositions	---	2	9	4	---	5.0	26.66
produce different types of writing like email messages, memos, invitations, proposals etc that suit my future professional needs	---	1	3	7	4	3.75	73.33
comprehend written texts to follow instructions for the writing tasks	---	---	5	7	3	5.0	66.66
use punctuation, mechanics, and other academic writing conventions to write effectively	1	3	7	3	1	3.0	26.66
write for my audience	---	1	4	7	3	3.75	66.66
interpret information from diagrams, tables, and charts	---	---	4	4	7	5.0	73.33
summarize and paraphrase	---	1	6	7	1	3.75	53.33
develop logical argument for writing	---	1	6	6	2	3.75	53.33
edit my writing for	---	3	2	6	4	3.75	66.66

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Rating	Percent Agree
accuracy							
take notes during the class	---	1	1	8	5	3.75	86.66
improve my reading habits to develop vocabulary	---	1	---	10	4	5.0	93.33
practice subject specific tasks for developing my writing skills	---	2	5	4	4	3.75	53.33
use computer for my academic needs	---	1	3	5	6	3.75	73.33
use library for reading, reference, and research	1	3	4	6	1	3.00	46.66
use dictionary to meet my academic needs	---	---	4	8	3	5.0	73.33

**Percent Agree (%) = Agree & Strongly Agree Responses combined*

Appendix 3

Student motivation (with results)

In my opinion (tick whichever applicable):

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Rating	Percent Agree
Good command of English language is important for success in college and profession	---	1	1	6	7	3.75	86.66
English language will help me become a global citizen	---	1	1	3	10	3.75	86.66
Learning English language is fun	1	---	3	6	5	3.75	73.33
It is easy to learn academic writing	---	5	4	5	1	3.75	40.00
I do not feel discouraged when I cannot write correctly	2	1	9	1	2	3.00	20.00
Good writing skills will help me progress in my profession	---	1	---	8	6	5.0	93.33

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Rating	Percent Agree
I am always ready to do a writing task	---	2	5	6	2	3.75	53.33
I will develop my writing skills with the passage of time	1	---	1	8	5	3.75	86.66
My family praises me when they find me writing something	2	2	5	5	1	3.0	40.00
My teachers encourage me even when I make mistakes	---	---	5	5	5	5.0	66.66
I feel happy when I get good scores in writing examination	---	---	1	3	11	5.0	93.33
My class mates appreciate when I write well	---	4	3	5	3	3.75	53.33
I perform better when I am encouraged	---	---	3	5	7	5.0	80.00

**Percent Agree (%) = Agree & Strongly Agree Responses combined*

Appendix 4

Student learning styles (with results)

INTEREST INVENTORY

This questionnaire asks about your interests, abilities and activities in nine particular areas.

Respond to each statement **ticking** the **SCALE** whichever applicable.

(You do not have to be interested in all of the activities in each numbered group, just most of them.)

I am interested in

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Rating	Percent Agree
Communicating ideas, discussing, creative & other writing, reading, acting, telling jokes,	---	1	3	7	4	3.75	73.33

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Rating	Percent Agree
playing with language or word games.							
Recognizing patterns and relationships, 'cracking' codes, solving problems and number patterns or calculating complex problems	2	1	7	4	1	3.0	30.00
Making models, drawing, imagining how to build things, reading maps, working with wood, other material or construction sets.	1	4	2	5	3	3.0	53.33
A Sport/s, exercise, aerobics, physical training, creative movement, dance, acting, miming or other physical activities	1	2	6	2	4	3.0	40.00
Music, listening for relaxation or pleasure, rhythm patterns, music playing, performing, reproducing rhythm or pitch by singing or playing.	2	3	1	7	2	3.0	60.00
Group activities, clubs, cooperative tasks, being with others, community service activities, being responsible or being a leader.	---	1	6	5	3	3.75	53.33

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean Rating	Percent Agree
Finding about your own feelings and thoughts, focusing on your own behavior and that of others, spending time by yourself, thinking about thinking.	---	2	7	3	3	3.75	40.00
Looking after nature, being in nature, visiting places where animals live, finding out about the connections between environments and animals.	---	2	4	7	2	3.75	60.00
Being aware of a spiritual self and world, involvement in different religious activities and tasks, being involved in spiritual celebrations and rites.	---	1	6	6	2	3.75	53.33

**Percent Agree (%) = Agree & Strongly Agree Responses combined*

Adapted from: Bowles T, Australian Journal of Educational & Developmental Psychology. Vol 8, 2008, pp 15-26

Appendix 5

Learners' Profile

Please provide answers to the following items:

Name (optional): _____

First Language: _____

Age: _____

Education completed: _____**English language learning experience:** _____**Doing this course to (tick whichever applicable):****i- complete degree****ii- get a job****iii- learn another language****iv- travel abroad for higher education****Appendix 6 (Results & Commentary)****Diagnostic Test Evaluation Form (frequency & incidence of errors)**

Content	Total
Introduction	
Relevant to the topic	14
Thesis statement	7
Paragraph 1	
Topic Sentence	13
Example	6
Support	11
Concluding sentence or transition	1
Paragraph 2	
Topic Sentence	10
Example	4
Support	7
Concluding sentence or transition	00
Paragraph 3	
Topic Sentence	10
Example	2
Support	7
Concluding sentence or transition	1
Conclusion	
Transition	7
Restate claim, summarize main points	6
Opinion	00
Coherence	
Cohesion	
Pronoun reference	--
Substitution	--
Ellipses	--
Transitions	16
Grammar	

Subject-verb Agreement	23
Nouns	18
Verb tense, consistency	26
Adjectives	2
Adverbs	2
Pronouns	9
Articles	5
Prepositions	8
Conjunctions	1
Possessives	1
Double negatives	3
Sentence fragments	5
Parallelism	
Vocabulary/ errors of diction	14
Punctuation	24
Spelling	123
Task completion (incomplete)	8

Appendix 7 (course content: mapping & delivery)

Note: The following colour-coding highlights different course objectives being dealt with in the delivery plan:

✚	Grammar -- form and function
✚	Cohesion and coherence: signal words; organization of ideas
✚	Pre-writing – Brainstorming and clustering
✚	Writing -- guided writing with prompts
✚	Writing -- free writing
✚	Post-writing – Editing for correction and improvement including spelling, & punctuation
✚	Formative & summative assessment;

Course mapping and delivery plan

Week	Unit Objective/s	Topic/s	Delivery plan
Week 1 Unit 1 & 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To introduce the course plan To practice clause structure To practice pre-writing skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent & dependent clauses Brain-storming for ideas 	<p>Grammar & discourse: Understanding and practicing relationship between ideas. Independent, dependent, & coordinate clauses. In pairs, students practice how to use coordinators using <i>and</i>, <i>but</i>, <i>for</i>, <i>nor</i>, <i>or</i>, <i>so</i>, <i>yet</i> & subordinators <i>after</i>, <i>before</i>, <i>because</i>, <i>if</i>, <i>when</i>.</p> <p>Pre-writing (Skills): Generating ideas in groups;</p>

			each group will write their ideas; a class representative will list the ideas from all the groups; short listing the ideas; organizing the ideas; find the focus for the topic sentence; writing sentences from other ideas.
Week 2 Unit 3 & 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To practice sentence structure To practice pre-writing skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simple, compound, and complex sentences Clustering for ideas 	<p>Grammar & discourse: Simple sentence with single & multiple subject-verb combination (writing sentences with single subject & verb, single subject & double verb, and double subject and single verb); using coordinators for compound sentences(sentence combination exercises); using subordinators and conjunctive adverbs to combine pairs of simple sentences to complex sentences; using logical dependent words to fill in the missing parts of a larger sentence with two or more simple sentences and one or more dependent sentences to make compound-complex sentences.</p> <p>Pre-writing (Skills): In groups, writing the topic in the circle; writing ideas around the circle; connecting the ideas with a line; identifying similar ideas and putting them together. First in-class assignment on the use of coordinators & subordinators</p>
Week 3 Unit 5 & 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To structure the topic sentence based on examples To practice grammar for form & function 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The topic sentence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The topic The controlling idea Subject-verb agreement 	<p>Grammar & discourse: Identifying & underlining the main idea in a paragraph; limiting the main idea; circling the controlling idea; revising too general or too narrow idea to a certain focus; In pairs, practicing writing topic sentences from a list</p>

			<p>of supporting points.</p> <p>Grammar & discourse:</p> <p>Subject-verb agreement: An introductory exercise for review and diagnosis; finding the subject & verb of a sentence by underlining sentences; distinguishing subjects from prepositional phrases by cross out method; underlining multi-word verbs. Editing an exercise for correction.</p>
Week 4 Unit 7 & 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To write supporting sentences for a paragraph based on examples To practice grammar for form & function 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exemplification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Writing topic sentence & ordering detail ➤ Using signal words Verb forms 	<p>Using examples for support: Underling the examples in a paragraph; using “<i>for example</i>”, “<i>for instance</i>”, & “<i>such as</i>” for signaling; exercises on providing two examples for each sentence. Writing topic sentence for examples.</p> <p>Grammar: Verb forms: An introductory exercise for review and diagnosis; keeping tenses consistent by crossing out the incorrect and writing the correct form. Editing an exercise for correction. Second in-class assignment on subject-verb agreement & verb consistency.</p>
Week 5 Unit 9 & 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To write a controlled paragraph based on examples To practice grammar for form & function 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice writing paragraph using examples Parallel construction 	<p>Guided practice for writing paragraphs with examples: Writing two or three examples for each of the given statements; discussing the examples in groups; choosing one of the statements as the topic sentence; using examples as the supporting details; writing the first draft; using the checklist for revision; writing the final draft.</p> <p>Grammar: Parallelism: An introductory exercise for review and diagnosis; parallelism explained; Practice exercise with italicized unbalanced parts;</p>

			Exercise on sentence completion providing parallel parts. Editing a paragraph for correction.
Week 6 Unit 11 & 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To write topic sentence for a paragraph based on cause & effect To practice grammar for form & function 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The topic sentence for cause & effect <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The topic & the controlling idea Signal words Sentence fragments 	<p>Understanding causes & effects: Using pictures to understand causes & effects; signal words for causes such as <i>since</i>, <i>because</i>, <i>due to</i>, <i>because of</i> and signal words for effects like <i>therefore</i>, <i>thus</i>, <i>consequently</i>, <i>as a result</i>; writing topic sentences for both causes and effects.</p> <p>Grammar: Fragments: An introductory exercise for review and diagnosis; dealing with <i>dependent-word</i> fragments, <i>-ing</i> and <i>to</i> fragments, <i>added-detail</i> fragments, <i>missing-subject</i> fragments. Editing exercise for revision and correction. Mid-term examination on writing a guided paragraph using examples.</p>
Week 7 Unit 13 & 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To write supporting sentences for a paragraph based on cause & effect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cause & effect <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ordering detail Writing guided paragraphs 	<p>Writing paragraphs about causes: Discussing a list of causes in groups; deciding upon a topic sentence; writing and ordering supporting detail; writing the paragraph; editing for revision & correction.</p> <p>Writing paragraphs about effects: Discussing a list of effects in groups; deciding upon a topic sentence; writing and ordering supporting detail; writing the paragraph; editing for revision & correction.</p>
Week 8 Unit 15 & 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To write a free paragraph based on examples To fix spelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing paragraph using examples Dealing with spelling occurring because of similar sounds and plurality. 	Writing two exemplification paragraphs from a range of given topics using the process approach to writing. Sounds-alikes; plurals; Third in-class assignment sentence fragments.

	problems		
Week 9 Unit 17 & 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To practice writing free paragraph cause & effect To fix spelling problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing cause & effect paragraphs Changing form and structure of the words 	Writing two cause & effect paragraphs from a range of given topics using the process approach to writing. Changing y to i; ie & ei.
Week 10 Unit 19 & 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To fix punctuation problems To conduct final-term examination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using capital letters & apostrophe 	Capitalization; the apostrophe Final-term examination – writing two paragraphs one on exemplification and the other on cause and effect from a range of topics and choice.