

# Teaching and Learning English Functional Writing: Investigating Egyptian EFL Student Teachers' Currently-Needed Functional Writing Skills

By

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***Abstract.*** At an age marked by the emergence of new literacies, vast technological developments, and social networking practices, language is currently approached from a pragmatic perspective that recognises its functional use to meet realistic communicative goals. Taking this into account, the present study sought to identify the functional writing skills needed by EFL student teachers and suggest some methods/techniques for teaching functional writing in English language courses at Egyptian public schools. To reach this two-folded objective, the researcher employed a *mixed-method* research design that included both *quantitative* and *qualitative* data collection and analysis methods/techniques. More specifically, after composing a comprehensive functional writing skills list based on thematic analysis of a number of documents (n=50), an online survey was administered to a group of EFL teacher educators (n=40) requesting them to rate each skill in the list in terms of its importance on a 5-point Likert scale. Then, a semi-structured interview was conducted with some EFL teacher educators (n=15) to identify the working methods/techniques which could be valid and appropriate nowadays for teaching English functional writing at Egyptian public schools. The study reached a preliminary list of functional writing skills (54 items under 9 main categories) as well as a final list and taxonomy of those items re-ordered descendingly based on statistical means (max= 5.00) calculated through SPSS based on participants' ratings. Additionally, the study proposes a set of methods/techniques to be used for teaching functional writing at Egyptian public schools derived from interviewees' accounts (e.g. active learning strategies, collaborative learning, and online learning).

***Keywords:*** *EFL student teachers; functional writing; functional writing skills; pragmatic competence; teaching functional English; teaching functional writing*

## المستخلص باللغة العربية:

### العنوان باللغة العربية:

تعليم وتعلم الكتابة الوظيفية في اللغة الإنجليزية: دراسة استقصائية لمهارات الكتابة الوظيفية

### المعاصرة المطلوبة للطلاب المعلمين في مصر

في ظل العصر الحالي الذي يتسم بالمعارف الجديدة والتغيرات التكنولوجية السريعة والمتلاحقة التي فرضت نفسها على الواقع التربوي المعاصر وكذا أوجه التواصل الإجتماعي الإلكتروني بممارساته اللغوية المتعددة ، أضحت من اللازم إعادة النظر في تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية وتبني منظور برجماتي-نفعي للكتابة بشكل خاص يضمن استخدامها الوظيفي لتحقيق أهداف واحتياجات تواصل حقيقي في الحياة الواقعية. ومن هذا المنطلق، تسعى الدراسة الحالية إلى تعرف مهارات الكتابة الوظيفية المطلوبة للطلاب المعلمين بالفرقة الرابعة-شعبة اللغة الإنجليزية، بكلية التربية – جامعة أسيوط، وكذا طرائق وأساليب تعليم الكتابة الوظيفية في مقررات اللغة الإنجليزية بالمدارس. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف المزدوج، قام الباحث باستخدام المنهج البحثي المختلط (Mixed-Method Research) في جمع البيانات وتحليلها، والذي يتضمن طرقاً وأدوات كمية-عددية quantitative وأخرى كيفية-وصفية qualitative كالتالي: (1) التحليل الموضوعي القائم على الأفكار الناشئة Thematic Analysis لمجموعة من النصوص الإلكترونية (50 نصاً) للتوصل إلى مجموعة من الموضوعات-الفئات تمهيداً لعمل قائمة شاملة بالمهارات الوظيفية (كيفية ووصفية)؛ (2) الاستبيان المسحي Online Survey الذي طبق على 40 مشاركاً من أعضاء هيئة التدريس ومدربي معلم اللغة الإنجليزية لتحديد درجة أهمية المهارات المستخلصة (54 مهارة) على مقياس ليكرت الخماسي (Five-Point Likert Scale) الذي يتراوح ما بين 1: "غير مهم على الإطلاق" و 5: "مهم للغاية" (كمي-عددي)؛ (3) المقابلات الشخصية شبه المنظمة Semi-Structured Interviews مع 15 مشاركاً (أعضاء هيئة تدريس تخصص مناهج اللغة الإنجليزية بعدد من كليات التربية بجامعات مصرية) لتعرف طرائق وأساليب تعليم الكتابة الوظيفية بالمدارس (كيفية ووصفية). توصلت نتائج الدراسة إلى قائمة بمهارات الكتابة الوظيفية (ن=54) (مدرجة تحت 9 فئات-موضوعات) رتبت تنازلياً فيما بعد حسب المتوسط الإحصائي (بحد أقصى 5.00) بمساعدة برنامج SPSS بناءً على تقييم المشاركين (ن=40) لجميع بنود القائمة المدرجة في الاستبيان، ومن ثم إعداد قائمة نهائية في ضوء ذلك. كذلك تضمنت النتائج مجموعة من الطرائق والأساليب المناسبة لتعليم الكتابة الوظيفية بالمدارس (مثل أساليب التعلم النشط والتعلم التعاوني والتعلم الإلكتروني).

## 1. Introduction & Background

Modern and networked life nowadays requires developing a *pragmatic competence* of the English language that facilitates a functional-purposeful use of it, something which is not always supported within formal learning settings. More specifically, learning *functional English* that takes language further into a more realistic/contextual realm that involves everyday-life situations has become a pressing prerequisite. Besides, learners need to find practical purposes that should encourage them to use English to meet specific communicative and survival needs (Nunan, 1999; Street, 2009). This way, they might find it meaningful and relevant, and hence feel motivated to learn it.

As Gee (2007) argues, language has its true home in action, the world, and dialogue, not in dictionaries and texts alone. In other words, language should take its appropriate place in tangible practices that mimic natural use. Thus, there should be a context in which linguistic segments, competencies, and skills are called upon and functionally employed.

Foreign language learners might show mastery of the vocabulary and grammar of the target language, but without possessing a comparable control over the *pragmatic* uses of it: they might know, for example, several forms of thanking or complaining, but without being able to identify when it is appropriate to use one form instead of another (Juan & Campillo, 2002). When learners fail to express their intentions or understand others', a 'pragmatic failure' occurs (Zhuge & Wu, 2005: p75).

*Functional English* or *Functional Linguistics* has come to the fore to refer to the pragmatic use of English to accomplish a variety of realistic (personal and social) purposes. In order to be functional, language must be used in a communicative interaction and must influence the listener or the reader in specific deliberate ways. This way, it relates closely to the meaningful/realistic use of language while it is employed for meeting certain communicative needs.

As an approach to linguistics, it is concerned with language as an instrument of social interaction rather than as a system of formal rules that is viewed in isolation from their communicative uses. It considers the individual as a social being and investigates the way in which s/he acquires language and uses it in order to communicate with others in his or her social environment (Richards & Schmidt, 2002).

According to Leech's (1987) notions of functional language, English involves: (1) interpersonal transactions between the writer or speaker and the audience; (2) ideational transactions that represent the concerns and beliefs of the writer; and (3) textual transactions that present the ideas and the connections between what is written and the meaning derived or constructed by the reader. This highlights the interactive relationships among personal intentions, interpersonal interactions, and the text as a means of written communication.

Therefore, a *functional approach* to language in general and writing in particular achieves communication within writing, and ensures meaningful use (Hartnett, 1997). Writing thus becomes an effective means of communication with others, not merely a means of displaying academic knowledge. Further, writing is strongly enhanced when instruction is explicitly designed to address learners' specific needs and objectives; it becomes a main device for self-expression, shaping ideas, and convincing others (Brown, 1994; Nunan, 1999; Salem, 2013).

Subsequently, *functional writing* relates mainly to communicative-pragmatic uses of English while writing to accomplish some realistic goals/needs. That is, the writing activities carried out resemble those done in real life for practical purposes. Hence, functional writing is about applying writing to real examples, situations and tasks, and accordingly, learners should produce realistic and meaningful documents. It is also about 'quality' rather than 'quantity', and learners should be able to work on a piece until they are satisfied with it (The Functional Skills Support Programme, 2007: p92).

Some recent research studies have dealt with pragmatic skills and functional language use in general (e.g. Abdallah, 2013; Norris, 1997; de Villiers, 2004). In this regard, Abdallah (2013) investigated the possibility of integrating new pragmatic forms of online writing in English (e.g. collaborative writing and connective writing) into a pre-service EFL teacher education programme through a community-of-practice design facilitated by online social-networking (i.e. Facebook). In the same vein, de Villiers (2004), in developing a test of pragmatic skills for children of ages between 4 and 9 years, focused on a number of functional language skills that are important for children's success in early schooling and for the development of fluent reading and writing. They included: (1) wh-question asking; (2) communicative role taking; (3) linking events in a cohesive narrative; and (4) articulating the mental states of the characters in a story.

Other studies tackled functional writing or composition skills in English (e.g. Kuhlemeier & Bergh, 1997; Maroko, 2010; Salem, 2013; Williamson, 2013). For example, Salem (2013) employed a *Writer's Workshop Approach* to develop some functional writing skills for some pre-service primary English language teachers in Hurgada Faculty of Education, Egypt. Also, Maroko (2010) explored the *Authentic Materials Approach* to demonstrate how it may be used in the teaching of functional writing in the classroom. The paper proposed an authentic text-based teaching and learning methodology that can be used in the acquisition of functional writing skills in the classroom.

In the same vein, Kuhlemeier and Bergh (1997) analysed the relationships between writing instruction and functional composition performance for third-year students of Dutch secondary education. Multivariate multilevel analysis showed that 10 out of 36 instructional characteristics were related to functional composition performance. The effective instructional characteristics included: instruction and exercises in writing functional texts; writing for a specific purpose; tailoring to a particular audience; global

rating of writing products by the teacher; and frequent evaluation of Dutch language proficiency through teacher-made tests and written assignments.

More closely, a recent action research study by Williamson (2013) investigated whether the achievement levels in L2 functional writing ability/skills can be raised. Following observation of Functional Skills English practice, students appeared to readily struggle with the requirements of the writing curriculum following the introduction of the new qualification. The main conclusion was that a new focus on developing functional writing skills in adolescents is needed due to insufficient preparation for life skills, employability and study at higher education levels by secondary school. Also, a change was proposed to urge Functional Skills practice away from the traditional teaching strategies, and therefore accept that students require inspirational, motivating and creative learning contexts to promote attainment of L2 writing skills.

Although there is a pressing need to identify, categorise, and list the concrete functional writing skills needed by English language learners, no research studies so far (to the best of the researcher's knowledge) have attempted to do so. Therefore, and based on this gap in literature, this study attempts to identify and categorise those English functional writing skills and provide a working list and taxonomy to be used within the Egyptian context, along with some working methods/techniques to be used for teaching functional writing at public schools.

## **2. Research Problem**

Although functional writing is a vital topic in language learning, especially within the Egyptian context, few studies have dealt with it. This gap in literature is the main motive for conducting this study. Moreover, there is no clear categorisation of those functional writing skills which have been sometimes confused with oral communication skills in English. In particular, no previous studies have provided a clearly complete list (or any

categories/taxonomies) of those functional writing skills in general, and those needed within the Egyptian context of English language learning in particular.

Generally, as Maroko (2010) notes, students joining middle-level colleges, universities and the workplace have limited functional competency in the English language. The teaching approaches and syllabi at learning institutions do not give adequate attention to functional writing. Teacher preparation institutions are no exception, especially as far as the Egyptian context of pre-service EFL teacher education is concerned; there, the main focus is on the mastery of theoretical knowledge about the English language and how to teach it at different educational stages. There is no clearly established connection between this abstract knowledge about language on the one hand, and the proper functional use of it in life for realistic/pragmatic purposes on the other.

Many prospective teachers of English (i.e. EFL student teachers) at Assiut University experience difficulties with the pragmatic use of the English language, especially as far as functional writing is concerned. This is critical at the undergraduate stage, especially because as they approach graduation, their need for developing functional writing skills becomes so persistent: as prospective teachers of English, they will be required to write down lesson plans, short reports, summaries, and narratives. Sometimes they might need to simplify (in writing) some difficult English passages to suit students' actual linguistic levels. Even more challenging, they will be required to teach some functional aspects of the English language (i.e. Language Functions), and subsequently develop their students' functional writing skills such as: writing reports, descriptions, letters, and e-mails. This necessitate that they themselves (as language teachers) should possess in advance reasonable levels of competency in those functional language aspects.

A review of the English courses at both preparatory and secondary stages reveals the existence of many functional writing tasks associated with realistic modern language use which are sometimes neglected by in-service teachers. In order to help their prospective

learners with accomplishing those tasks effectively, senior EFL student teachers need to be competent enough themselves in the pragmatic and functional use of the English language while in the pre-service stage.

A small-scale observation revealed that many of those student teachers were unable to use English functionally in writing in simulated real-life situations. For example, when required to produce some simple short documents (e.g. reports, reviews, formal e-mails, and advertisements), many of them were unable to produce satisfactory products belonging to a target genre, and thus demonstrating inappropriate functional writing skills.

A further observation checklist of some English classes in teaching practice sessions at preparatory and secondary schools in Assiut indicated that many senior EFL student teachers:

1. were unable to deal with functional writing sections properly;
2. felt challenged while teaching aspects of functional English;
3. employed some old-fashioned and obsolete methods/techniques that did not cope with the challenging nature of those functional writing tasks, and thus disregarded modern (and potentially more effective) techniques.

In addition, senior EFL student teachers' online discussions as part of an online English Teaching Methodology course revealed a need to develop many personal functional writing needs (e.g. planning for future tasks and composing e-mails/memos). In particular, they needed to get involved in purposeful meaningful learning tasks that draw upon functional use of the English language.

In literature, functional writing skills are always displayed in the form of specific targets or products (e.g. memos, letters, descriptions, complaints, and personal diaries) with no reference to the process itself and the specific skills/components involved in it.



Therefore, there is a persistent need to identify the specific functional writing skills (under a suggested taxonomy) that EFL student teachers at Assiut University College of Education require before graduation along with the appropriate methods/techniques to be used for teaching functional writing at public schools.

### **3. Research Objectives**

1. Generating a list of those functional writing skills needed by EFL student teachers under a taxonomy.
2. Surveying the most important English functional writing skills from EFL teacher educators' perspectives, and subsequently producing a final taxonomy that includes those functional skills.
3. Identifying the different teaching methods/techniques that EFL student teachers need for teaching functional writing sections in English at the Egyptian public schools.

### **4. Research Questions**

1. Which functional writing skills that prospective English language teachers (senior EFL student teachers) in Egypt need to master for a pragmatic language use?
2. Which functional writing skills in the proposed list are important to prospective English language teachers from EFL teacher educators' perspective?
3. Based on empirical data, what is the final functional writing taxonomy that can be derived from the list?
4. What are the different teaching methods/techniques that EFL student teachers need for teaching functional writing sections in English courses at the Egyptian public schools?

### **5. Importance and Significance**

The following issues give significance and importance to the present study:

1. The study mainly contributes theoretically to the field of TESOL/TEFL by suggesting a list and taxonomy of those functional writing skills needed by EFL student teachers.
2. It targets assessing the degree to which all the items in the list are important in EFL teacher educators' viewpoints, and thus presents a new order of items based on empirical evidence.
3. It links student teachers' functional use of the English language, especially in writing, with the required teaching methods/techniques needed by English teachers in order to address those functional writing sections while teaching at the mainstream schools in Egypt.

## **6. Definitions of Research Terms**

### **6.1 Functional English**

According to Richards and Schmidt (2002), *functional English* refers to the usage of the English language required to perform a specific function or reach a certain social goal.

For the purposes of the study, functional English is defined as "*a mode of the English language in which the main focus is on the communicative, pragmatic, and everyday uses of the language, rather than on the theoretical, academic and/or literary aspects of it.*"

### **6.2 Functional Writing**

Shorofat (2007) defines *functional writing*, as opposed to academic and creative writing, as that kind of writing which aims at conveying a specific, direct and clear message to a specific audience. It includes several areas such as writing instructions, formal letters, notes, invitations, advertisements, and reports.

For the present research purposes, *functional Writing* is defined as "*a language practice that fits in within the pragmatic and functional use of English. It is writing that is meant*

*to fulfil real-life purposes, such as: making a request or giving advice, inviting someone and applying for something."*

### **6.3 Functional Writing Skills**

For the purposes of the study, *functional writing skills* are perceived as those tangible, concrete aspects/components of linguistic performance that indicate a learner's mastery of functional writing in English for realistic everyday-life purposes (e.g. writing a short report, jotting down some personal notes into a reflective diary, and writing down a formal complaint to present to someone).

### **6.4 Pragmatics**

Generally, the word 'pragmatics' refers to the study of the use of language in communication, particularly the relationships between sentences and the contexts and situations in which they are used (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). Further, pragmatics is perceived as an "*indispensable aspect of language ability in order for L2 learners to understand and be understood in their interactions with native speakers*" (Jung, 2001: p1).

## **7. Research Methodology**

### **7.1 Main Research Design/Framework**

To accomplish the main research objectives, the researcher employed a *mixed-method research design* to guide the study. The mixed-methods approach to educational research has been gaining ground as 'a third methodological movement' following the dominance of both positivism and interpretivism. According to this new approach, the research problem is the starting point, which determines the choice between various quantitative and qualitative methods to accomplish research objectives (Creswell, 2003; Tashakorri & Teddlie, 2003). Hence, for data collection and analysis, the research framework employed in this study involves both *quantitative* (i.e. a narrow-scale survey-based research methodology for administering and analysing a Functional Writing

Online Survey/Questionnaire), and *qualitative* (i.e. thematic-qualitative analysis and semi-structured interviews) research methods. This involves a short preliminary qualitative stage of literature review and thematic analysis of data to compose a Functional Writing Skills List before administering it online to some Egyptian EFL teacher educators.

Then, the quantitative section involves a *survey-based research methodology* to obtain quantitative/statistical data online through an Internet-based survey that should mainly serve the production of an accurate, objective numeric account. The main purpose here is to provide an objective evaluation of the composed items in the list in terms of how important and relevant they are to the target student teachers. Choosing this method is driven by the fact that survey research is often the most effective and dependable way to obtain accurate, reliable, and valid data, especially when a quite big number of participants located in different places is required (Alreck & Settle, 2004). This is supported by the Internet which has recently enabled the online designing and administration of surveys using free websites such as SurveyMonkey (visit: <https://www.surveymonkey.com>).

Finally, the qualitative section also involves 'semi-structured interviews' as a research tool whose main purpose is to obtain deep, insightful accounts that capture the complexities involved in human interactions. This depends on the nature of the research question itself (the 3<sup>rd</sup> question here) that necessitates reflections/ideas based on participants' personal perspectives and actual experiences (Grix, 2004; Pring, 2005).

## **7.2 Research Tools**

The following research tools were employed in the study for data collection:

1. Thematic Analysis of online documents to generate a preliminary Functional Writing List and Taxonomy.

2. An Online Functional Writing Survey (prepared and administered by the researcher).
3. A Semi-Structured Interview (prepared and administered by the researcher).

## 8. Research Procedures

To answer the *1<sup>st</sup> research question*, the following procedures were followed:

- a) Conducting a thematic-qualitative analysis of relevant literature and some Internet-based resources (50 documents) to generate a categorised list of some functional writing skills. The proposed categories emerged as themes (e.g. report writing, writing for descriptive purposes, writing to guide and direct others) on a developmental, iterative fashion. That is to say, some preliminary minor themes were merged with other relevant themes, while some minor points/items were expanded to act as wider themes. Initially, 4 themes emerged at the preliminary thematic analysis stage, which were finally developed as 9 main themes/categories (see Table 2 in the Results Section).
- b) Submitting the draft list to some Egyptian EFL teacher educators (n=10) to evaluate the list in terms of consistency and convenience, and to suggest any necessary amendments.
- c) Composing a list of functional writing skills based on the suggested amendments (see Table 2).

To answer the *2<sup>nd</sup> research question*, the following procedures were employed:

- a) Suggesting a rating scale that ranges between 1 and 5 (1= Not At All Important; 2= Somewhat Important; 3= Important; 4= Very Important; 5= Extremely Important) for each item in the list (see Figure 1 below).
- b) Designing, based on the final list, an online survey using the SurveyMonkey website. This online survey included on the 1<sup>st</sup> page an introductory letter to participants that explains the research context and the specific instructions that

participants should follow. On the next page, it included some questions on personal and biographical data (e.g. gender, job, and affiliation), which were requested for specific research purposes (see Table 1 below). On the 3<sup>rd</sup> page, it included the complete list (composed of 54 items to be rated on a 5-Point Likert Scale). On the final page, participants were requested to include in a blank text box any comments/suggestions, followed by a 'Thank You' note for completing the survey. It is worth mentioning that the online design of the questionnaire or survey was done in such a way that no missing values could be obtained at the analysis stage. This was mainly supported by the options made available by the website: More specifically, most questions (especially the main list rating one) were obligatory, and hence could not be skipped by participants. If skipped, an error message would show requesting respondents to fill in the missing sections or choose an answer before being able to move into the next page or submit the whole survey (see Figure 2 below).

- c) The reliability of the survey as a research tool was computed using the split-half method through Cronbach's Alpha, and was found to be 0.95.
- d) Conducting purposive sampling as the most appropriate technique for locating potential participants (i.e. EFL teacher educators). In particular, using a contact list based on Egyptian universities websites and educational databases and Interest Groups, some 150 EFL teacher educators were invited by e-mail to participate with clear instructions to follow and a direct link to the survey, but the final number of participants who accepted and replied by answering the survey was 40. Participants were mainly requested to rate each item in the list in terms of how important it is - in their viewpoints - to the target student teachers.
- e) The whole survey administration process took a period of 1 month that involved following up with participants and sending e-mail reminders.
- f) Creating a variable sheet on SPSS in which the characteristics of each variable in the survey are identified. Thus, 61 variables are created (6 entries for biographical data + the 54 items in the list + 1 entry for comments) to prepare

- for inserting collected data for each participant in an SPSS data sheet (see Figure 3 below). The SurveyMonkey website records individual reports of each participant' responses on the survey that could be easily used while inserting data into SPSS.
- g) To re-order the generated 54 items/skills in the list in terms of importance based on participants' responses on the 5-point Likert scale, results were statistically analysed using SPSS descriptive statistics. This was calculated through obtaining means for all items based on each participant's responses on the online survey. The calculated means were re-ordered descendingly to reflect the new order of the 54 items based on importance (see Table 3); subsequently, all items were clustered into the corresponding categories/themes to form a broader taxonomy composed of 9 main categories/themes.

To answer the 3<sup>rd</sup> *research question* that relates to a final functional writing taxonomy, the following procedures were employed:

- a) Based on the statistical results, the initial taxonomy of categories/themes (see Table 4) was modified through a new statistical process of computing and grouping variables; this involved re-calculating means of new variables (i.e. the 9 main categories) based on the values of the original 54 variables that represent all items in the list.
- b) Then, like the original ones, the new variables were ordered descendingly based on means. This resulted into a final taxonomy (see Table 5) that indicates the importance that all participants (n=40) attached to each of the 54 items and the underlying 9 categories in the list.

**Figure 1: A Screen Shot of 1<sup>st</sup> Part of Page 3 of the Online Survey Displaying some Items on the List and the 5-Point Rating Scale:**

**Online Survey for Rating English Functional Writing Skills**

List

\*7. Please rate each item in the list keeping in mind the following categories:

1. Writing for Planning Purposes
2. Writing for Formal-Academic Purposes
3. Writing for Reflective Purposes
4. Writing to Summarise & Criticise
5. Writing to Report Something
6. Writing to Provide Descriptive Accounts
7. Writing to Guide & Direct Others
8. Writing to Inform & Convey Specific Information to Others
9. Writing for Self-expression & Social Interaction

	Not At All Important	Somewhat important	Important	Very important	Extremely important
*1. Writing for Planning Purposes): 1.1 Planning for something through writing down 'to-do' lists.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1.2 Creating regular 'reminders' to ensure that things will be done on time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1.3 Composing a shopping list that includes items needed at home.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1.4 Creating a schedule to follow while doing something within a specific time period.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*2. Writing for Formal-Academic Purposes): 2.1 Taking notes while listening to or watching something (e.g. a lecture or movie.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.2 Writing formal letters/e-mails' for study and recruitment purposes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.3 Communicating in writing with a course instructor to ask for clarification.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.4 Filling in a job 'application form'.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.5 Writing an 'official/business letter/e-mail' to request something (e.g. unpaid leave).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.6 Writing a recommendation letter' on behalf of someone planning to study abroad in which his/her merits/qualifications are to be highlighted.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*3. Writing for Reflective Purposes): 3.1 Creating a personal diary along with some entries.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.2 Writing down some personal reflections as an entry in a diary.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.3 Jotting down some personal notes of something.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.4 Jotting down personal interpretations of something (e.g. a bit of news or a story).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.5 Writing down some personal reflections about an event or incident.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Table 1: Participants' Personal & Demographic Data (n=40)**

<b>Gender</b>	Males 21 (52.5%)	Females 19 (47.5%)			
<b>Profession (EFL Teacher Educators)</b>	<b>University staff members 34 (85%)</b>		<b>Other teacher educators 6 (15%)</b>		
	Demonstrator & Researchers 6 (15%)	Assistant lecturers 5 (12.5%)	Lecturers 14 (35%)	Associate professors 7 (17.5%)	Professors 2 (5%)
<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Colleges/Faculties of Education</b>		<b>Assiut Faculty of Arts</b>	<b>Ministry of Education</b>	
	Assiut 15 (37%)	Other places 14 (35%)	2 (5%)	3 (7.5%)	
<b>Teaching Experience</b>	>10 years 8 (20%)	10-20 years 22 (55%)	<20 years 10 (25%)		



**Figure 2: A Screen Shot of 2<sup>nd</sup> Page of the Online Survey for Examples of Obligatory Questions and Error Messages Resulting from Missing Values**

Online Survey for Rating English Functional Writing Skills

**This question requires ONE answer ONLY.**

\* 1. Title

Mr  Miss  Mrs  Dr  Prof.

**You MUST write here a valid e-mail address!**

\* 2. Name

Name:

Email Address:

**This question requires ONE answer ONLY!**

\* 3. Gender

Male  Female

**This question requires an answer.**

\* 4. Academic Post

Demonstrator  
 Researcher  
 Assistant Lecturer  
 Lecturer  
 Associate Professor  
 Professor  
 Other (please specify)

**You MUST provide here ONE answer ONLY!**

\* 5. Number of Years of Teaching Experience

Less Than 10 Years  
 From 10-20 Years

**Figure 3: A Screen Shot of an SPSS (Variable Sheet View)**

	Name	Type	Width	Decimals	Label	Values	Missing	Columns	Align	Measure	Role
1	TITLE	Numeric	8	0	Participant's Title	{1, Mj}...	None	8	Left	Nominal	Input
2	NAMEandE...	String	50	0	Participant's Na...	None	None	8	Left	Nominal	Input
3	GENDER	Numeric	8	0	Sex	{1, Male}...	None	8	Left	Nominal	Input
4	AC POST	Numeric	8	0	Academic Post	{1, Demonst...	None	8	Left	Nominal	Input
5	YrsOfExperi...	Numeric	8	0	No of years of t...	{1, Less Th...	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
6	AFFL	Numeric	8	0	Affiliation	{1, Faculty...	None	9	Left	Nominal	Input
7	VAR1.1	Numeric	8	0	WriteToDoList	{1, Not At A...	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
8	VAR1.2	Numeric	8	0	CreatingRegRe...	{1, Not At A...	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
9	VAR1.3	Numeric	8	0	Composing a s...	{1, Not At A...	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
10	VAR1.4	Numeric	8	0	Creating a sche...	{1, Not At A...	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
11	VAR2.1	Numeric	8	0	Taking notes w...	{1, Not At A...	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
12	VAR2.2	Numeric	8	0	Writing formal l...	{1, Not At A...	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
13	VAR2.3	Numeric	8	0	Communicating...	{1, Not At A...	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
14	VAR2.4	Numeric	8	0	Filling in a job a...	{1, Not At A...	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
15	VAR2.5	Numeric	8	0	Writing an offici...	{1, Not At A...	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
16	VAR2.6	Numeric	8	0	Writing a reco...	{1, Not At A...	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
17	VAR3.1	Numeric	8	0	Creating a pers...	{1, Not At A...	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
18	VAR3.2	Numeric	8	0	Writing down s...	{1, Not At A...	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
19	VAR3.3	Numeric	8	0	Jotting down so...	{1, Not At A...	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
20	VAR3.4	Numeric	8	0	Jotting down pe...	{1, Not At A...	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
21	VAR3.5	Numeric	8	0	Writing down s...	{1, Not At A...	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
22	VAR3.6	Numeric	8	0	Writing down a...	{1, Not At A...	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
23	VAR4.1	Numeric	8	0	Writing a sum...	{1, Not At A...	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
24	VAR4.2	Numeric	8	0	Writing a short...	{1, Not At A...	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input
25	VAR4.3	Numeric	8	0	Writing down th...	{1, Not At A...	None	8	Left	Ordinal	Input

To answer the 4<sup>th</sup> question that relates to appropriate methods/techniques for teaching functional writing at public schools, the following procedures were employed:

- a) Designing an e-mail based semi-structured interview to administer to some EFL teacher educators (n=15) from among those who have already answered the

online survey (n=40) so as to ensure participants' familiarity with the topic, and hence the high possibility of providing relevant and insightful accounts.

- b) The interview protocol was submitted to some jury members to ensure validity and suitability for the purposes of the study, and some modifications were made accordingly.
- c) The interview was administered through e-mail (as an asynchronous online communication tool) during a period of 3 weeks to enable participants to reply at their convenience, and therefore provide the desired insightful account. In this regard, a sequence of e-mail correspondences/exchanges with each participant was required to conduct this interview.

## 9. Research Results & Discussion

In this section, the main results of the study (combined with discussion) will be displayed in the same order of the already stated research questions.

First of all, for the 1<sup>st</sup> research question related to composing a preliminary list of those functional writing skills needed by senior EFL student teachers, a thematic analysis of 50 documents resulted in the following list (see Table 2 below):

**Table 2: List of Functional Writing Skills Needed by EFL Student Teachers**

Main Categories	Items/Skills
1. Writing for Planning Purposes	1.1 Planning for something through writing down 'to-do' lists.
	1.2 Creating regular 'reminders' to ensure that things will be done on time.
	1.3 Composing a shopping list that includes items needed at home.
	1.4 Creating a schedule to follow while doing something within a specific time period.
2. Writing for Formal & Academic Purposes	2.1 Taking notes while listening to or watching something (e.g. a lecture or movie).
	2.2 Writing 'formal letters/e-mails' for study and recruitment purposes.
	2.3 Communicating in writing with a course instructor to ask for clarification.
	2.4 Filling in a job 'application form'.
	2.5 Writing an 'official/business letter/e-mail' to request something (e.g. unpaid leave).

Main Categories	Items/Skills
	2.6 Writing a 'recommendation letter' on behalf of someone planning to study abroad in which his/her merits/qualifications are to be highlighted.
3. Writing for Reflective Purposes	<p>3.1 Creating a personal diary along with some entries.</p> <p>3.2 Writing down some personal reflections as an entry in a diary.</p> <p>3.3 Jotting down some personal notes of something.</p> <p>3.4 Jotting down personal interpretations of something (e.g. a bit of news or a story).</p> <p>3.5 Writing down some personal reflections about an event or incident.</p> <p>3.6 Writing down a personal judgement or appreciation of something.</p>
4. Writing to Summarise & Criticise	<p>4.1 Writing a summary of an article or a book.</p> <p>4.2 Writing a short critical review on a piece of art (e.g. a movie, a play or a novel).</p> <p>4.3 Writing down the main ideas tackled in an oral presentation.</p> <p>4.4 Stating the main highlights (i.e. topics, points and ideas) of a piece of writing.</p> <p>4.5 Writing down the main headings, sub-headings and topic sentences included in a piece of writing.</p>
5. Writing to Report Something	<p>5.1 Composing a report on an event or incident (e.g. a visit, an accident or event).</p> <p>5.2 Making a police statement.</p> <p>5.3 Creating a report of a problem that has occurred while using a machine or equipment (e.g. a computer, a fridge or a washing machine).</p> <p>5.4 Composing a report on someone's (academic) progress.</p> <p>5.5 Making a complaint about someone or something.</p>
6. Writing to Provide Descriptive Accounts	<p>6.1 Writing a brief sketch or profile about someone.</p> <p>6.2 Providing a written descriptive account of something.</p> <p>6.3 Writing a short biography about a famous person.</p> <p>6.4 Writing a short Curriculum Vitae (CV).</p>
7. Writing to Guide & Direct Others	<p>7.1 Writing some directions/instructions to others to follow for guidance.</p> <p>7.2 Composing short instructional manuals and guidelines.</p> <p>7.3 Designing a poster to communicate a message.</p> <p>7.4 Writing signs, marks or diagrams for others to follow while in a new place.</p>
8. Writing to Inform & Communicate Specific Information to Others	<p>8.1 Composing a brochure/leaflet on a specific topic of interest.</p> <p>8.2 Writing notices to display information (e.g. to warn, advise, or inform particular groups of people) in strategic places (e.g. doors, class notice board, and public places).</p> <p>8.3 Writing an announcement to others.</p> <p>8.4 Writing a memo to inform someone or a group of people about a specific issue encouraging them to take action.</p> <p>8.5 Writing a text message of 200 characters maximum to communicate something to others.</p> <p>8.6 Creating an ad (advertisement) with the goal of selling something.</p>

Main Categories	Items/Skills
	8.7 Composing a short informative article about something.
	8.8 Writing a short news article.
	8.9 Composing an informative piece using a series of pictures or other stimuli.
9. Writing for Self-Expression & Social Interaction	9.1 Communicating to others in writing personal opinions about someone or something.
	9.2 Stating in writing what one really feels towards someone or something.
	9.3 Providing written feedback when required.
	9.4 Making personal requests in writing (e.g. using e-mail).
	9.5 Writing to thank someone for something.
	9.6 Writing to explain something.
	9.7 Writing to express personal satisfaction/dissatisfaction with someone or something.
	9.8 Writing (e.g. using e-mail) to invite someone for something.
	9.9 Writing (e.g. using e-mail) to accept or refuse an invitation.
	9.10 Writing to apologise for something done wrong.
	9.11 Writing informally to discuss normal everyday life and carry on friendly conversations with others.

As the table above illustrates, 9 main categories were obtained to act as headings/themes under each of which a set of functional writing skills were assigned. They were obtained throughout a prototyping, grounded theory-based thematic analysis process in which case themes continuously developed, rephrased, and revised till a final product was reached. More specifically 4 preliminary themes emerged during initial analysis of some documents (e.g. writing reports, writing memos, writing directions to others, and writing descriptive accounts). Out of those preliminary themes, further themes emerged each of which worked as an independent theme/category on its own right (e.g. writing to inform others and writing for reflective purposes).

Each skill or item of the 54 items in the list was phrased as much clearly and accurately as possible to indicate a narrow, specific component that can be assessed based on learners' observable written performance (e.g. as in free-writing language testing formats).

Second, for the 2<sup>nd</sup> question that relates to degree of importance of items in the list based on participants' ratings, a descriptive statistical analysis enabled in SPSS was employed. More specifically, *means* were obtained for all items in the list, and subsequently, all items were re-ordered descendingly based on those calculated 'means' (see Table 3 below). This means that, based on participants' ratings, the items with the highest degree of importance came on top, followed by items of less importance in the middle, while the least important items came at the bottom.

**Table 3: New Order of Items in the List Based on Descending Means**

Items	S	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
6.4 Writing a short CV	1	0	5	4.13	1.11
2.1 Taking notes while listening	2	0	5	4.05	1.06
2.4 Filling in a job application form	3	0	5	4.02	1.12
9.3 Providing written feedback when required	4	0	5	4.00	1.17
9.9 Writing (e.g. using e-mail) to accept or refuse an invitation.	5	0	5	3.95	1.17
9.4 Making personal requests in writing	6	0	5	3.95	1.19
9.5 Writing to thank someone for something	7	0	5	3.93	1.09
4.3 Writing down the main ideas tackled in an oral presentation	8	0	5	3.90	1.05
9.6 Writing to explain sth	9	0	5	3.90	1.03
4.4 Stating the main highlights of a piece of writing	10	0	5	3.90	1.10
2.2 Writing formal letters/emails	11	0	5	3.90	1.23
9.8 Writing (using e-mail) to invite someone for something	12	0	5	3.88	1.13
2.3 Communicating in writing with a course instructor2ask4 clarificat	13	0	5	3.88	1.04
4.5 Writing down the main headings, sub-headings& topic sentences	14	0	5	3.85	1.18
2.5 Writing an official/business email2request sth	15	0	5	3.83	1.17
4.1 Writing a summary of an article or a book	16	0	5	3.80	1.13
9.10 Writing to apologise for something done wrong	17	0	5	3.78	1.18
8.4 Writing a memo to inform smone or a group of people about sth	18	0	5	3.70	1.11
2.6 Writing a recommendation letter on behalf of someone	19	0	5	3.65	1.09
8.3 Writing an announcement to others	20	0	5	3.63	1.17
5.4 Composing a report of someone's (academic) progress	21	0	5	3.62	1.15
5.1 Composing a report on an event or incident	22	0	5	3.60	1.08
9.2 Stating in writing what one really feels about someone or sth	23	0	5	3.60	1.28

9.1 Communicating to others in writing personal opinions about sth	24	0	5	3.60	1.34
9.11 Writing informally to discuss normal everyday life and carry on f	25	0	5	3.58	1.26
8.1 Composing a brochure/leaflet on a specific topic	26	0	5	3.58	1.01
9.7 Writing to express personal satisfaction/dissatisfaction with sth	27	0	5	3.58	1.15
7.1 Writing some directions/instructions to others to follow	28	0	5	3.57	1.21
8.5 Writing a text of 200 characters max to communicate sth to othrs	29	0	5	3.53	1.11
8.2 Writing notices to display information in strategic places	30	0	5	3.50	1.16
6.2 Providing a written descriptive account of sth	31	0	5	3.50	1.24
1.4 Creating a schedule to follow	32	0	5	3.50	1.15
7.3 Designing a poster to communicate a message	33	0	5	3.50	.98
7.4 Writing signs, marks or diagrams for others to follow in a new	34	0	5	3.45	1.06
4.2 Writing a short critical review on a piece of art	35	0	5	3.43	1.19
1.1 Writing to-do lists	36	2	5	3.38	1.05
3.6 Writing down a personal judgment or appreciation	37	0	5	3.38	1.19
1.2 Creating regular reminders	38	0	5	3.38	1.05
8.7 Composing a short informative article about sth	39	0	5	3.33	1.18
5.5 Making a complaint about someone or something	40	0	5	3.33	1.09
6.3 Writing a short biography about a famous person	41	0	5	3.33	1.20
6.1 Writing a brief sketch or profile about someone	42	0	5	3.30	1.22
7.2 Composing short instructional manuals or guidelines	43	0	5	3.28	1.03
1.3 Composing a shopping list	44	1	5	3.28	1.21
8.9 Composing an informative piece using a series of pictures	45	0	5	3.25	1.05
3.5 Writing down some personal reflections about an event	46	0	5	3.18	1.24
3.1 Creating a personal diary along with some entries	47	0	5	3.18	1.15
8.6 Creating an ad with the goal of selling sth	48	0	5	3.15	1.27
5.3 Creating a report of a problem has occurred while using a machi	49	1	5	3.15	1.07
8.8 Writing a short news article	50	0	5	3.08	1.16
3.2 Writing down some personal reflections as an entry	51	0	5	3.08	1.09
3.3 Jotting down some personal notes	52	0	5	3.05	1.19
3.4 Jotting down personal interpretations of something	53	0	5	2.95	1.24
5.2 Making a police statement	54	1	5	2.65	1.07

A general look at the new order of the 54 items in the list leads to the following conclusions:

1. It seems that participants prioritised some functional writing skills that directly relate to everyday-life and emergent pragmatic needs (e.g. 6.4 writing a CV, 2.4 filling in a job application, and 2.1 taking notes while listening to a presentation or a lecture).

2. They assigned a low degree of importance to many reflective writing practices (e.g. 3.4 Jotting down personal interpretations of something, 3.3 Jotting down some personal notes, and 3.2 Jotting down some personal reflections as an entry in a diary).
3. They assigned a moderate degree of importance to those functional skills of communicating certain ideas to others (e.g. 7.1 Writing some directions/instructions to others to follow) and writing about other people and surroundings (e.g. 9.2 Stating in writing what one really feels about someone or something).
4. They did not prioritise many important academic skills needed in formal study (e.g. 4.2 Writing a short critical review on a piece of art, and 6.1 Writing a brief sketch or profile about someone).

Third, for the 3<sup>rd</sup> question that relates to a final functional writing taxonomy, as seen in Table 3 above, calculating means for each item in the list and re-ordering items descendingly based on these means helped with facilitating the process of understanding the list. However, it was not sufficient alone to provide a comprehensive view of the broader taxonomy that takes into account the main themes/categories underlying those 54 items. Therefore, the 9 themes/categories previously identified in the original list (i.e. initial taxonomy) (see Table 4 below) were re-ordered in terms of importance.

**Table 4: Initial Taxonomy Involving Original Order of Main Categories in the List**

<b>Main Categories/Themes</b>
1. Writing for planning purposes
2. Writing for formal & academic purposes
3. Writing for reflective purposes
4. Writing to summarise & criticise
5. Writing to report something
6. Writing to provide descriptive accounts
7. Writing to guide & direct others
8. Writing to inform & communicate specific information to others
9. Writing for self-expression & social interaction

To do that, the items (skills) under each of the 9 underlying categories were statistically grouped together as one scale in SPSS (i.e. 9 scales in total) to calculate the statistical means of each, and subsequently compare all categories against each other to reach a final taxonomy based on descending means (see Table 5 below).

**Table 5: New Taxonomy After Grouping Items & Ordering Means Descendingly**

<i>Categories/Themes</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
1. Writing for Formal & Academic Purposes ( <i>2<sup>nd</sup> in original list</i> )	40	.00	5.00	3.88	.93
2. Writing for Self-Expression & Social Interaction ( <i>9<sup>th</sup> in list</i> )	40	.00	5.00	3.79	1.00
3. Writing to Summarise & Criticise ( <i>4<sup>th</sup> in list</i> )	40	.00	5.00	3.77	.98
4. Writing to Provide Descriptive Accounts ( <i>6<sup>th</sup> in list</i> )	40	.00	5.00	3.56	1.03
5. Writing to Guide & Direct Others ( <i>7<sup>th</sup> in list</i> )	40	.00	5.00	3.45	.92
6. Writing to Inform & Communicate specific info ( <i>8<sup>th</sup> in list</i> )	40	.00	5.00	3.41	.95
7. Writing for Planning Purposes ( <i>1<sup>st</sup> in list</i> )	40	1.50	5.00	3.38	.93
8. Writing to Report Something ( <i>5<sup>th</sup> in list</i> )	40	.80	5.00	3.27	.87
9. Writing for Reflective Purposes ( <i>3<sup>rd</sup> in list</i> )	40	.00	5.00	3.13	1.03

Therefore, based on the table above, there is a number of conclusions about this newly ordered taxonomy of main functional writing themes/categories:

1. '*Writing for Formal & Academic Purposes*' moved up in rank from 2<sup>nd</sup> in the original list to 1<sup>st</sup> in the new list. This reflects participants' original orientations towards the main academic functions of writing within formal learning settings.
2. '*Writing for Self-Expression & Social Interaction*' rose abruptly from last (9<sup>th</sup>) in the list to 2<sup>nd</sup> in the list. This reflects participants' concern with the main dual use of writing for both expressing oneself properly and interacting socially with other people around.
3. '*Writing for Reflective Purposes*', originally 3<sup>rd</sup> in the list, moved down to the bottom as the 9<sup>th</sup> (and last) category. This might indicate the small (and insufficient) amount of care given by teachers and teacher educators to the personal reflective, and meditative functions of writing within the Egyptian context.



As for the *4th question* that relates to the different teaching methods/techniques needed for teaching functional writing sections in the English courses delivered at the Egyptian public schools, the e-mail-based semi-structured interview conducted with 15 EFL teacher educators produced many results derived from participants' answers to some main questions (e.g. In your opinion and based on your experience, what are the different teaching methods/techniques that EFL student teachers need for teaching those functional writing sections/aspects in English at the Egyptian public schools?)

In particular, some participants (n=5) highlighted two main approaches to teaching writing in general: the *process*-based vs. *product*-based approaches. Under each approach, there is a number of different techniques that can be used with different functional writing tasks.

One of the interviewees provided some details about the process approach stating that it involves engaging students in a workshop to elicit a topic, brain-storm ideas, make logical connections through semantic mapping, write a first draft, proof-read and edit accordingly, and finally publish their writing products.

Most interviewees (n=10) mentioned the *task*-based approach, whereby different groups of students are assigned certain tasks (e.g. sending or replying to emails) and they have to accomplish the task collectively. Others (n=7) suggested the *whole* language approach, whereby students get involved in different types of readings (mainly in literature), and then asked to summarise, complete or improvise similar pieces of writing in a mode similar to jigsaw activities.

Many interviewees (n=11) suggested *active* and *cooperative/collaborative* learning strategies because they involve language learners in semi-realistic activities and facilitate authentic communication and interactions among them. Other interviewees

(n=6) favoured *electronic, self-paced* learning where learners have access to online resources that should help them to see real communicative models made by native speakers.

Based on her research and teaching experience, a participant recommends brainstorming, free-writing and reflective journals as the most suitable methods/techniques that can help students to find ideas, collect information, activate knowledge, and organise thoughts.

Recognising the pragmatic dimensions of functional writing, another participant comments:

*I think ESL functional writing teaching at the Egyptian public schools should focus on developing communicative skills for both social interaction and personal communication. Learners are likely to be able to write expressive and suitable messages in their writings. The teacher's main aim is to give them lessons which are focused and pertinent to their immediate environment and the demands of their future for each writing exercise, so that each part can convey real life in their way of education and social experiences. Furthermore the piece of their writings should give the impression as a deal whereby the learners gets something done through communication.*

According to some participants (n=8), there are many direct methods/techniques that can be used for teaching functional writing at Egyptian public schools:

- Class/school events and community news;
- Composing and posting scripts on forums and other websites;
- Writing small books and e-books with exciting small stories for others to read online or offline;
- Leaving messages on the community or school notice boards for others to read;
- Letter and email writing, especially through Internet and social media. Using this communicative approach, learners can begin by writing short notices to their classmates, not only in the same classroom, but also country-wide and world-wide.

Some participants (n=5) recommend '*group/collaborative writing*' and '*peer editing*' as the best techniques. Some others (n=3) recommend asking learners to: (1) do

homework in the form of reports rather than traditional formats; (2) write regularly formal e-mail messages to their teachers including information on their academic progress; (3) write functionally their notes about the course along with general everyday life affairs; and (4) write, under teachers' guidance, specific reflective accounts about certain events to convey a specific message.

Based on those accounts, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. At the broad level, there are two main approaches for teaching writing in general, and functional writing in particular, to be used at public schools: the *product*-based approach vs. *process*-based approach. Generally, the process-based approach is favoured because it involves learners more in the different stages of writing (e.g. planning, drafting, editing, re-drafting, and publishing).
2. Most methods/techniques stated by participants fit in within the following main categories: active learning, collaborative learning, socio-communicative learning, reflective and self-paced learning, authentic task-based language learning, electronic learning (including online learning and network-based language learning), and community-based learning.
3. Some direct useful techniques were suggested, such as: The Writer's Workshop, Peer Editing, Authentic Materials Review, E-mail-based Communication, Semantic Mapping, and Jigsaw activities, and Posting on Notice-boards.

## **10. Conclusion & Recommendations**

The results of the study take into considerations some delimitations throughout the data collection and analysis processes. For example, the list of functional writing skills were based on a pragmatic-realistic perspective. Thus, the same skills can be approached differently by other researchers. Second, only 40 participants took part in the online survey out of the whole 150 EFL teacher educators affiliated with many Egyptian universities and academic institutions who were invited by e-mail. If all invited people did the survey, results could have been stronger and more rigorous. Third, the

study is limited to a group of senior EFL student teachers at Assiut University College of Education.

The main results of the study stated and discussed above provided two main contributions to the field of English language teaching/learning:

1. a comprehensive list of those functional writing skills needed by Egyptian senior EFL student teachers (prospective English language teachers), with specific reference to College of Education, Assiut University.
2. a new taxonomy of functional writing skills based on empirical data.
3. a set of methods/techniques to be used for teaching functional writing sections in the English courses delivered at Egyptian public schools.

Based on the results, the study recommends the following:

1. Employing modern authentic and task-based approaches in teaching functional writing at Egyptian public schools;
2. Including 'Functional Writing' topics as part of the 'Writing' courses delivered to EFL student teachers in Egyptian colleges of education;
3. Providing Egyptian language learners in general with more realistic experiences for developing their functional writing skills.

Moreover, there is a need for future experimental and action-research studies that employ items in the list to test their contextual utility within different language learning settings. More investigation is needed to link those functional writing skills with realistic school-based language learning practices in public schools. Also, there is a need to investigate the effect of using some new approaches that can be used for teaching functional writing, such as: collaborative and reflective writing techniques, e-learning strategies, and authentic material review.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: The Functional Writing Online Survey/Questionnaire

### A-Cover Letter

Dear **Professor/Colleague**,

It's my pleasure to write to you. I'm a staff member and researcher in the Curriculum & Instruction Department at Assiut University College of Education. I'm in the process of conducting a research study on: '**EFL student teachers' currently-needed functional writing skills**'. As a preliminary stage of this research project, I've identified and compiled a list of those '**Functional Writing Skills**' that senior **EFL student teachers** might need in their final year of study, just before entering the workplace. For the purposes of this research study, I define 'Functional Writing' as '*this pragmatic type of writing that is meant to fulfil real-life purposes, such as: making a request or giving advice, inviting someone and applying for something*'. You're kindly requested to go through all main categories in the list below to rate each item (skill) there in terms of the **degree** to which it is - in your opinion - '**important**' to those student teachers.

On the first page, you're kindly requested to provide some **personal information** to identify yourself (e.g. name, e-mail address, gender, and affiliation). Please **NOTE** that any personal data you provide will be treated as **highly confidential**. On the second page, you'll find **a list of those Functional Writing Skills** (9 main categories including **54 items**). Please read carefully each of the 54 items in the list, and then rate it in terms of importance by **choosing/clicking ONE** of the FIVE options available in the **rating scale** to the right, and which range between: **(1= Not At All Important and 5= Extremely Important)**. Please feel free to **add** any comments/suggestions in the allocated space on the last page. Then, after you've finished, please click **DONE** to submit the survey.

Please kindly **open this link** to access our online survey:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/38VHTBK>

Thanks so much in advance!

Kind regards,

**The researcher:**

**Dr Mahmoud M. S. Abdallah** (*Curriculum & TESOL/TEFL Methodology, College of Education, Assiut University*)



**B-Personal data**

*Before going through the survey itself, please provide us with some personal information as follows: (NOTE: Any personal information you provide will be treated as highly confidential and will be used ONLY for research purposes)*

**Title** (*delete as appropriate*): Mr/Miss/Mrs/Dr/Prof.

**Name:** ..... (Optional) **E-mail address:**.....

**Gender** (*delete as appropriate*): Male/Female

**Academic Post** (*delete as appropriate*): Demonstrator/Researcher/Assistant-Lecturer/Lecturer/Associate-Professor/Professor/Other (*Please specify*).....

**No of Years of Teaching Experience** (*delete as appropriate*): Less than 10 years/From 10-20 years/More than 20 years

**Affiliation** (*delete as appropriate*): Faculty of Education, Assiut University/Faculty of Education (Another University)/Faculty of Arts, Assiut University/Other (*please specify*).....

## C-Screen Shots of Online Survey

Online Survey for Rating English Functional Writing Skills					
List					
<b>*7. Please rate each item in the list keeping in mind the following categories:</b>					
1. Writing for Planning Purposes					
2. Writing for Formal-Academic Purposes					
3. Writing for Reflective Purposes					
4. Writing to Summarise & Criticise					
5. Writing to Report Something					
6. Writing to Provide Descriptive Accounts					
7. Writing to Guide & Direct Others					
8. Writing to Inform & Convey Specific Information to Others					
9. Writing for Self-expression & Social Interaction					
	Not At All Important	Somewhat Important	Important	Very Important	Extremely Important
*1. Writing for Planning Purposes): 1.1 Planning for something through writing down 'to-do' lists.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1.2 Creating regular 'reminders' to ensure that things will be done on time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1.3 Composing a shopping list that includes items needed at home.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1.4 Creating a schedule to follow while doing something within a specific time period.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*2. Writing for Formal-Academic Purposes): 2.1 Taking notes while listening to or watching something: e.g. a lecture or movie.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.2 Writing 'formal letters/e-mails' for study and recruitment purposes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.3 Communicating in writing with a course instructor to ask for clarification.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.4 Filling in a job 'application form'.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.5 Writing an 'official/business letter/e-mail' to request something (e.g. unpaid leave).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2.6 Writing a 'recommendation letter' on behalf of someone planning to study abroad in which his/her merits/qualifications are to be highlighted.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*3. Writing for Reflective Purposes): 3.1 Creating a personal diary along with some entries.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.2 Writing down some personal reflections as an entry in a diary.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.3 Jotting down some personal notes of something.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.4 Jotting down personal interpretations of something (e.g. a bit of news or a story).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.5 Writing down some personal reflections about an event or incident.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3.5 Writing down some personal reflections about an event or incident.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3.6 Writing down a personal judgement or appreciation of something.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*4. Writing to Summarise & Criticise): 4.1 Writing a summary of an article or a book.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4.2 Writing a short critical review on a piece of art (e.g. a movie, a play or a novel).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4.3 Writing down the main ideas tackled in an oral presentation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4.4 Stating the main highlights (i.e. topics, points and ideas) of a piece of writing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4.5 Writing down the main headings, sub-headings and topic sentences included in a piece of writing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*5. Writing to Report Something): 5.1 Composing a report on an event or incident (e.g. a visit, an accident or event).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5.2 Making a police statement.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5.3 Creating a report of a problem that has occurred while using a machine or equipment (e.g. a computer, a fridge or a washing machine).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5.4 Composing a report on someone's (academic) progress.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5.5 Making a complaint about someone or something.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*6. Writing to Provide Descriptive Accounts): 6.1 Writing a brief sketch or profile about someone.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6.2 Providing a written descriptive account of something.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6.3 Writing a short biography about a famous person.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6.4 Writing a short Curriculum Vitae (CV).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*7. Writing to Guide & Direct Others): 7.1 Writing some directions/instructions to others to follow for guidance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7.2 Composing short instructional manuals and guidelines.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7.3 Designing a poster to communicate a message.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7.4 Writing signs, marks or diagrams for others to follow while in a new place.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*8. Writing to Inform & Convey Specific Information to Others): 8.1 Composing a brochure/leaflet on a specific topic of interest.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8.2 Writing notices to display information (e.g. to warn, advise, or inform particular groups of people) in strategic places (e.g. doors, class notice board, and public places).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8.3 Writing an announcement to others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8.4 Writing a memo to inform someone or a group of people about a specific issue encouraging them to take action.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8.5 Writing a text message of 200 characters maximum to communicate something to others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Item ID	Item Description	1	2	3	4	5
8.2	Writing notices to display information (e.g. to warn, advise, or inform particular groups of people) in strategic places (e.g. doors, class notice board, and public places).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8.3	Writing an announcement to others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8.4	Writing a memo to inform someone or a group of people about a specific issue encouraging them to take action.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8.5	Writing a text message of 200 characters maximum to communicate something to others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8.6	Creating an ad (advertisement) with the goal of selling something.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8.7	Composing a short informative article about something.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8.8	Writing a short news article.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8.9	Composing an informative piece using a series of pictures or other stimuli.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
*9.1	Writing for Self-expression & Social Interaction): 9.1 Communicating to others in writing personal opinions about someone or something.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9.2	Stating in writing what one really feels towards someone or something.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9.3	Providing written feedback when required.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9.4	Making personal requests in writing (e.g. using e-mail).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9.5	Writing to thank someone for something.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9.6	Writing to explain something.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9.7	Writing to express personal satisfaction/dissatisfaction with someone or something.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9.8	Writing (e.g. using e-mail) to invite someone for something.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9.9	Writing (e.g. using e-mail) to accept or refuse an invitation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9.10	Writing to apologise for something done wrong.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9.11	Writing informally to discuss normal everyday life and carry on friendly conversations with others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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8. Please add below any comments/suggestions: (Thanks so much for taking the time to complete this survey!)

Prev

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## **Appendix 2: Email-Based Semi-Structured Interview**

### **A-Introduction**

*Hello!*

*As part of my research project on functional writing, in which you've already participated, I need to identify those methods/techniques that can be used for teaching functional writing sections at schools.*

*To accomplish this, I'm going to conduct a semi-structured interview with you through e-mail so that you can respond and provide your useful input at your own convenience.*

*The process will involve some e-mail exchanges in which an argument should develop based on some questions. I do appreciate your kind efforts and sincere cooperation.*

*Best regards*

*The researcher*

## **B-Sample Questions**

1. Do you think that functional English in general, and functional writing in particular, needs specific teaching methods/techniques?
2. Which methods/techniques you regard as effective for teaching functional writing at Egyptian public schools?
3. Why do you believe that those particular methods/techniques are useful?
4. In what ways might they be useful?
5. Have you ever used any of those methods/techniques?
6. Could you tell me more about your personal experience with those methods/techniques?
7. What about using online communication for teaching functional writing?
8. How can English teachers make learners more involved in the functional writing tasks/activities?