Arab Journal of Applied Linguistics
e-ISSN 2490-4198
Vol. 1, No. 1, January 2016, 74-96

http://www.arjals.com

Language knowledge and Self-efficacy of Pre-service Teachers in the United Arab Emirates: An Exploratory Study

Sana Tibi[1]
Faculty of Education, Queen's University, Canada
Patricia Stall
California State University San Marcos
R. Malatesha Joshi
Texas A & M University College Station, Texas
Yujeong Park
University of Tennessee

Abstract

The study exploredEnglish language learning of native Arabic-speaking pre-service teachersand examinedtheir self-efficacy on academic English proficiency. Writing samples from ten Arabic speaking female teacher education students in a university in the United Arab Emirates were analyzed using a rubric along with in-depth interviews. Overall, results revealed limited reading and writing practice in either language outside of school. Key findings from the interviews indicated that all of the participants had taken English classes since early in their elementary school years; however both Arabic and English learning consisted of skills-based language instruction with little or no practical and purposeful applications. Further, the respondents reported limited reading and writing practice in either language outside of school and cultural practices, inadequate instruction, and limited views of relevance for improving their English. All these reasons generally led to low levels of self-efficacy with regards to second language learning.
***Keywords*:** Self efficacy, English academic writing, Arabic native speakers, pre-serviceeducation students

[1]**Corresponding author**:
Sana Tibi, Faculty of Education, Queen's University, Canada
Email: s.tibi@queensu.ca

It has been well documented in the literature that even though various factors, such as family background and oral language, may contribute to failure in children's reading at early grade levels, good instructional procedures provided by teachers with good knowledge of systematic instruction can offset/counterbalance these early negative effects (Aaron, Joshi, &Quatroche, 2008; Joshi, Binks, Hougen, Dahlgren, Dean, & Smith, 2009; Vellutino, Scanlon, and Jaccard, 2003). One of the studies that explicitly showed the influence of good teacher knowledge was by McCutchen and her colleagues. In a series of studies from her group (McCutchen, Abbott et al., 2002; McCutchen &Berninger, 1999; McCutchen, Green & Abbott, 2009), it was found that when teachers had the linguistic knowledge related to literacy development, their students performed better on literacy-related skills. However, most of the published studies are from English-speaking countries, mostly from the U.S.Additionally, most of the studies have been conducted using a survey type instrument without interviewing the participants. The purpose of the present study is to overcome the two aforementioned drawbacks. We interviewed participants in the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) who are primarily speakers of Arabic language about their perceptions of self-efficacy in teaching literacy skills in English.

The intent of this study was to explore English language learners'(ELL) histories as well as current practices of native Arabic speaking teacher education students in an effort to examine the effects of self-efficacy on their academic English proficiency. The original source of the self-efficacy construct came from Bandura (1977), who theorized that one's beliefs about his/her capabilities is strongly related to the way s/he behaves and learns.We conducted ten semi-structured interviews with questions regarding self-efficacy and history with English language learning and analyzednumerous writing samples to track the English writing errors of teacher education students in a university in the United Arab Emirates (UAEU) for purposes of targeted writing instruction. Drawing from thebelief that meaning and understanding are integral to the learning process, we wanted to probe deeper than surface-level writing error analysis in an effort to identify the English language learning experiences and attitudes among UAEU pre-service education students and the effects of those learning experiences on self-efficacy in English.Adetailed analysis was conducted examining the effect of ELL experiences and self-efficacy. Initially, we analyzed the writing samples of tenrandomly selected female UAEU teacher education students to identify the frequency and types of error. The sametenstudents were also interviewed to identify their language learning experiences, their self-perceptions of proficiency in English, and the effects of self-efficacy on their motivation to improve their English. Subsequently, we analyzed more writing samples fromadditional UAEU pre-service education students to verify the findings from our analysis of error frequency. This further analysis helped us to corroborate our findings.

Background

The necessity of improved and more global education has become essential to equip UAE citizens with the knowledge to navigate a global society. While the UAE may have seemed rather cosmopolitan as it entered the 21st century, there remains a good portion of the country where literacy levels in Arabic as well as in English are less than proficient (UNESCO, 2010).

One key to global navigation is proficiency in English, which is currently the language most widely used in international communications (Jambor,2007; Quirk, 1985).Practically speaking, English has been used in higher education in some Arabic speaking countries because large numbers of faculty members are educated in Western countries and hence favor English. More importantly, several education reform initiatives taking place in many parts of the Arab world have chosen English as a medium of instruction in addition to the Arabic language starting from early grades of schooling (Arab Knowledge Report, 2011). Major changes have been made to the educational system in the UAE, including a big shift from the traditionally-held oral Arabic language to a recent move to incorporate bilingualism (Arabic and English) in kindergarten, school and university curricula. The last decade in particular has witnessed more attention given to teaching in English.Most content subjects such as sciences, math and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) are taught in Englishat all grade levels (Abu Dhabi Education Council, ADEC, 2010) and also in tertiary education. In addition, the standardization of terminology and the greater amount of resources in some highly technical areas are primarily available in English, thereby making the teaching of the material in English more convenient and sometimes more accurate (Zughoul, 1999).

One effort to develop English language proficiency in the UAE resides in the preparation of teachers who will be teaching large number of the population.While a score of 4.5 on the 9-band scale of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is required for entry into the UAEU, the demands of understanding and using specialized academic English accurately require more attention. According to the UAEU English language coordinator,Band 4 in IELTS indicates a limited user who would likely need at least an additional year of intensive English instruction to move to Band 6. Even though a score in Band 6 indicates competency, the student would still exhibit difficulty in an English-speaking university. Issues leading to that inadequacy are multi-faceted and complicated. In general, writing promotes developing strong literacy and communication skills that can impact students' academic performance and future careers (Coker & Lewis, 2008).

Academic English Acquisition and Proficiency

The difficulties associated with academic language proficiency for second language (L2) learners in general are well-documented (Cummins, 1992, 2009; Krashen, 1984; Scarcella, 2003). Academic writing at the university level can be a daunting task for many students, especially when that writing is to be done in a second language. The higher-level thinking processes that are expected from the university students are integral to the development of their understanding of the complex concepts that will make them knowledgeable and even experts in their fields. When thinking and writing process is complicated through the filter of a less familiar second language, the academic learning process can be thwarted.Even when the learner seems to be adequately prepared in the second language as exhibited by such tests as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)and even by success in L2 preparation courses, the ability to fully comprehend the academic usage of the second language and then the ability to communicate fluently in writing are not guaranteed. This lack of academic fluency can impede deeper understanding of the content and concepts a course has to offer. The lack of academic fluency can be generally related to overall difficulties in second language reading and linguistic ability. The Linguistic Threshold Hypothesis, posited by Cummins (1991),is based upon the assumption that a certain level of morphological, syntactic and lexical knowledge in L2 predicts proficiency in L2 reading comprehension. Readers with a low L2 linguistic threshold will find it difficult to use reading comprehension strategies from L1 (first or native language) to reading in L2 (second language).In contrast, readers with a high linguistic threshold will not have problems in transferring these skills from one language to the other(Lee &Schallert, 1997).

According to Scarcella (2003), English learners who have gained enough English to speak fluently do not often make an effort to communicate accurately, using correct syntax, grammar, and vocabulary. When English learners at this level read and encounter words they do not know, they tend to skip over them and rely on their instructors to explain the overall meaning of the passages and chapters. They may use new vocabulary words incorrectly because they have seen the words in their reading and do not fully understand their meaning, especially when confronted with increasingly difficult academic language. In their study of the lexical semantics of Arabic learners of English, Zughoul and Abdul-Fattah (2003) assessed participants on a multiple choice lexical translation task to determine competence in recognizing the correct English collocation, contextual and associative meaning of words with multiple meanings. The researchers commonly observed a high percentage of avoidance in responding to test items. While not the purpose of the study, the researchers

surmisedthat the participants would avoid certain tasks when they perceived them to be difficult or time-consuming, similar to the practice of skipping unknown words when reading.

Cummins (1999) has distinguished between academic English, also called*Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency* (CALP), and conversational language, also called *Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills* (BICS). BICS are especially dependent upon context clues such as body language and intonation. Thus, English learners in university settings tend to rely on their instructors' face-to-face explanations to better understand the academic English content. This face-to-face interaction is not present during the independent reading and writing processes of university students.

Further, to be fully engaged with the content when reading and writing in the second language, Scarcella(2003) suggested that the cognitive demands of higher levels of thinking and the use of the second language with true academic proficiency require an explicit framework for developing CALP, one that depends heavily on the added visual context clues. Academic English not only requires the learner to be able to read and understand complex vocabulary and concepts, it also encompasses the learner's ability to listen, speak, and write in order to appropriately communicate ideas and understanding. Schleppegrell andColombi (2002) assertedthat proficiency in reading and writing is especially related to long-term academic success.

When the second language is vastly different from the first language, difficulties in students' accuracy with both syntax and ideas in the academic writing of L2 are exacerbated. While English and Arabic are both alphabetic languages, based on corresponding phonemes and graphemes, there are several differences between the two languages, most notably, the difference between the spoken language and written language, referred to as diglossia; removal of vowels around grade 4; and the directionality of writing, with Arabic written from right to left. In a contrastive analysis of English and Arabic, Palmer, El-Ashry, Leclere, and Chang (2007) identified eight negative transfers in orthography, two in concepts of print, and four in syntax. For example, while letter forms do not change in English, they take on different shapes in Arabic, depending on placement in the word—initial, medial, or end. Vowel systems in English are also constant. By contrast, in Arabic short vowels include diacritical marks for young children; however, those marks are not included in texts intended for skilled adultliterates,leaving the reader to rely heavily on context and other resources (Abu-Rabia & Taha, 2004). The Arabic diacritical marks contribute phonology to the Arabic alphabet (Abu-Rabia, 2001). At a more advanced level, the diacritical marks (short vowels) serve a syntactic function (Abu-Rabia, 2001). Therefore, accurate reading in Arabic requires vowelizingword endings depending on the word's grammatical function in the sentence. In addition, Arabic nominal (noun) sentences do not contain a verb; thus, a direct translation in English would soundawkward (e.g., student smart).

English language learners in university settings in UAE often seek assistance in their writing from a writing center or editor, which may or may not be university-based. In either case, the English tutor is not likely to be an expert in the particular content field for which the university student is writing. The tutor does not necessarily know the content concepts and nuances of writing in a particular academic style. While the tutor is certainly helpful in strict editing, the ideas and thoughts of the L2 writer may never become clear and meaningful. To maximize the actual content learning and the improvement of academic English writing, we propose that the teaching of academic writing be integrated into the professional education courses,thus enabling UAEUteacher education students to gain proficiency in academic English and to understand the content at a deeper and more meaningful level.

Similarly, to promote academic expertise, Cummins (2009) suggested a framework for "…optimal [language] instruction [that] includes a Focus on Meaning, a Focus on Language and a Focus on Use" (p. 265). Cummins argued that teaching a first or second language without meaning does not provide the critical thinking necessary to understand the deeper meanings embedded within the society in which the language resides. Without the meaning and practical use of the language, the learner is usually limited to surface level understanding.

Self-Efficacy and Language Learning

The framework for optimal learning described by Cummins (2009) also included the necessity of positive teacher-student interactions within the learning community that promote the development of student identity along with cognitive engagement. If we ignore the attitudes and conditions affecting self-efficacy in learners, we are likely to sacrifice deeper understanding in the process. According to Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, these self-efficacy beliefs play a major role in an individual's development. The construct of self-efficacy influences people's motivation, the efforts they are willing to exert, and the degree to which they may persist or persevere when carrying out tasks.In fact, self-efficacy has also been shown to affect one's self-concept and self-esteem.

Self-efficacy is a construct that is task-specific and there is usually a strong correlation between self-efficacy beliefs and the task that is being performed or assessed. On the other hand, self-concept is not very specific. Self-concept is usually defined as global understanding of one's self (Bandura, 1986; Pajares, 1996,2000; Usher &Pajares, 2006, 2008). In fact, Bandura (1986) made a clear distinction between these two phenomena and warned against mistaking the two constructs. In addition, self-concept is usually more general than self-esteem; the latter is an evaluative element of

the self-concept. Self-esteem is usually defined as how we feel about or how we value ourselves or our feeling of pride about certain accomplishment in comparison with others (Bong &Skaalvik, 2003; Klassen, 2004). In addition, Bandura (1986) has made a clear distinction between self-efficacy beliefs and the outcome expectations of one's actions. The outcome expectations depend more on people's judgment of what they can accomplish rather than their beliefs about their academic capabilities. Although there is a positive relationship between the two, this form of relationship is not always consistent (Usher &Pajares, 2006,2008).

There is an ample body of research that shows the predictive value of self-efficacy beliefs and students' academic achievement across all areas and levels as well as students' career choices (Brown &Lent, 2006;Pajares&Urdan, 2006; Usher &Pajares, 2008). Research has further shown that students who are more confident in their capabilities tend to work harder, solve problems more efficiently, monitor their progress regularly and hence, achieve at a higher level than their able peers who do not have high self-efficacy. Similarly, experiencing failure will undoubtedly have a negative impact on one's self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1997)

Bandura (1977) hypothesized that individuals develop self-efficacy beliefs from four underlying sources: mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasions, and emotional and physiological states.The first and most powerful source, mastery experience, refers to one's interpretation and evaluation of results. Mastery experience is derived from one's own obtained previous attainments or success achieved on challenging tasks.Vicarious experience refers to students' interpretation of their capabilities in relation to the performance of others. In other words, students compare themselves to classmates, peers, and even adults. They are more likely to change their beliefs following a particular model they can relate to. If a student compares him/herself to a successful model, s/he is likely to gauge his/her capabilities based on this successful model.

In addition to comparing themselves to others, students build their self-efficacy beliefs through social persuasions and encouragement they receive from others such as parents, teachers and loyal friends. All the encouragement and support they receive serve as positive messages that enhance their self-confidence. Social persuasions may leave a positive impact or a negative one. In some cases, particularly when students are young, social persuasions may lead to undermining the student's self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997).

It is likely that self-efficacy is affected by Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) first identified the concept of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) in their seminal work. The authors postulated that in many cases, foreign language learners may fail to learn a foreign language due to their anxiety rather than their lack of motivation. The authors also argued that anxiety can be detrimental in

learning a second language because it negatively affects self-concept. FLA generally refers to communicative anxiety when using a foreign language. Dewaele, Petrides, and Furnham(2008) concludedthat "FLA has been identified as one of the major obstacles to acquisition and fluent production of foreign languages" (p.912). Additional evidence came from a study by Abu-Rabia (2004) whoadministered a Hebrew translation of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), developed by Horwitz and her colleagues, to 67 seventh graders in Israel.When correlated with both English (L2) and Hebrew (L1) reading comprehension measures, Abu-Rabia found strong relationships between high anxiety and less proficiency in L2. Results of the study also indicated that lower L1 abilities were significantly correlated to higher FLA.

Methods

This exploratory qualitative study employed semi-structured interviews to ascertain participants' histories of second language learning and their beliefs regarding self-efficacy and proficiency in the second language. The semi-structured interview was constructed to include questions that would focus responses to those specific topics (see Appendix A). Since this was a multiple case study, the semi-structured questions ensured cross-case comparability and remained flexible enough to seek out individual issues and phenomenon. For the semi-structured interviews, we developed a protocol to determine the effects of English language learning experiences on self-efficacy and individual academic writing processes. Based on literature reviewed on self-efficacy and after consulting seven colleagues in the College of Education at UAEU, the interview protocol was designed to determine the effects of physiological and affective responses to self-efficacy and motivation to gain better proficiency in academic English writing (See Appendix A for the interview protocol). Informed consent was obtained from all prospective participants. Interviews were conducted in the participants' native Arabic language to ensure more accurate and in-depth information. The interviews were then transcribed into Arabic by the first author who is fluent in Arabic and English, and returned to the participants to check content for accuracy. After that, the transcriptions were translated into English by the same first author. Furthermore, the bilingual researcher also checked translation and compared content, and asked another bilingual speaker to check the translations to ensure validity and reliability. Finally, each interview transcript, in Arabic and English, was returned to the participant to be checked for appropriate translation and accuracy, to ensure that intentions were not misrepresented, and to ensure that confidentiality had not been breached. Amendments to the transcripts were made if participants requested them.

Concurrently, writing samples from the ten interviewees in addition to 18 similar writing samples from other students who volunteered and signed a consent form were analyzed to corroborate error trends and to provide evidence regarding the lack of proficiency in English. The writing samples analyzed consisted of student responses to video-taped case studies of students with special needs. Students taking the course "Education for exceptional needs" are required to respond online to threads posted by the instructor. Usually these threads require students to comment or reflect on situations related to students with special needs. These were not writing samples that would be professionally edited. All writing samples were analyzed to determine patterns of error according to a contrastive analysis of the negative transfers between English and Arabic (Palmer, El-Ashry, Leclere, & Chang, 2007). Most codes were based on a syntactical contrastive analysis of English and Arabic negative transfers from Palmer et al. (2007). One orthographic code used from Palmer et al. identifies problems with tense and number. We added an error code for run on sentences and an error code for subject-verb agreement because these were clear patterns in students' writing. While the subject-verb disagreement errors are related to the orthographic problem with tense and number, the frequency of errors in this category indicated that it deserved its own category for purposes of later remediation. We also added a code for vocabulary, specifically word forms for frequently used academic vocabulary (See Appendix B).

Participants

Participants in the present study were female pre-service education teachers randomly selected from the college of education at the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU). All students enrolled in the different sections of the core course "Education for Exceptional Children" were invited through an advertisement posted in the college of Education to participate in the present study. A total number of 176 students answered the advertisement. Out of the total number (176), every 5th number was chosen (1, 5, 10, 15, 20 ... etc.). Ten students were selected randomly for an in depth interview in addition to analyzing their writing samples. These participants were randomly selected from around the country representing five out of the seven Emirates (Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Ras-Al khaimah, Sharjah, & Fujairah). The ten participating students signed an informed consent form prior to participating in the study. All students enrolled in the College of Education at the UAEU study their courses in English.Instructors teach in English regardless of their native language. Textbooks selected for the courses are in English, and are usually authored by English native speakers from the United States of America or Canada. All assignments and exams are required to be delivered in the English language. Although English (L2) has been taught since the elementary grades for all students, all students expressed that they feel incompetent to learn in English.

Results

Most Common Errors

Writing errors were coded and counted according to the table of negative transfers

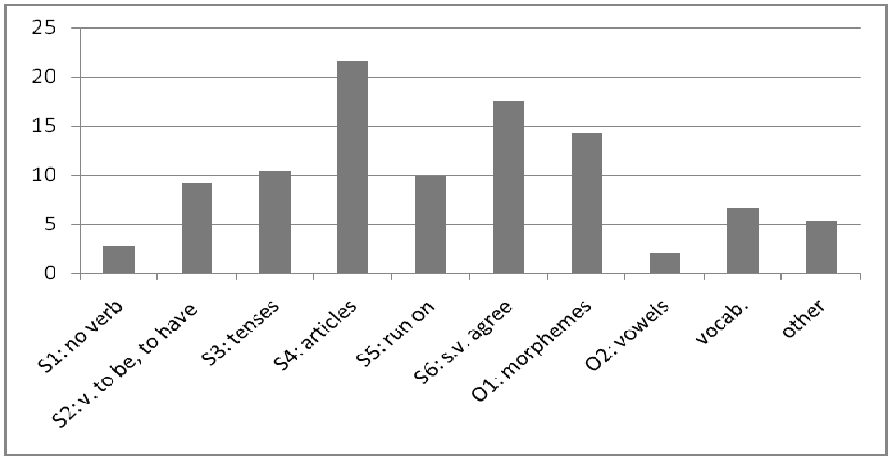

Figure 1. Types of error by percentage

between English and Arabic. Length of the samples ranged from 138-359 words. Frequency of errors in the samples ranged from 4.68-13.75%. Total error ranged from 8 in the shortest sample to 33 in two of the longer samples, though none were of considerable length (See Figure 1). Overall, the largest number of writing errors was related to the misuse of articles with errors in subject and verb agreement being a close second. Arabic has one article, which is close in meaning to "the" and has no article for "a" or "an." There were also a large number of errors with usage of the verbs "to be" and "to have." Once again, the Arabic language does not have verbs for "to be" or "to have." We added coding items for run on sentences and subject and verb agreement as it became apparent that these were common errors. The cause for multiple run on sentences could be attributed to the nature of written Arabic, which consists of long poetic sentences with much elaboration and description. However, the nature of the elaboration in these samples was more of a repetition and redundancy of what had already been said, which may be attributable to lack of vocabulary in English. By far, the greatest percentage of errors (71.68%) was related to sentence structure.

Limited Reading and Writing

The interviews were most revealing in terms of consistent and problematic trends in the English learning of these students. All students had taken English classes since early in their elementary school years from non-native English speakers. Both L1 and L2 learning consisted of skills-based language instruction with little or no practical and purposeful application. Overall, the respondents reported limited reading and writing practice in either language outside of school.

In the Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis, Cummins (1991) argues that if the external environment provides an adequate stimulus for preservation of a first language, then intensive exposure to a second language at school will contribute significantly to bilingual development without having any negative influences on the first language. Additionally, the extent to which an effective bilingual teaching program advances literacy in one language, transfer of linguistic knowledge to the other language will occur under the conditions of adequate exposure to the other language and adequate motivation to learn the language. While two of the respondents in our study indicated they understood the need to learn English as a global language, most reported that they did not have any motivation to learn English and felt "forced" to use it.

The Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis further postulates that teaching reading skills in one language not only improves literacy in that language but also leads to a deep conceptual linguistic knowledge, which is highly related to literacy and to general academic skills in another language (Cummins, 1991). Learning English as a second language in such an isolated manner, as that reported by our interviewees, without authentic practice in speaking outside of the classroom or reading and writing in the L2 has been compared tojumping into the deep end of the pool without a life jacket.

Motivation and Self-Efficacy

Personal or professional purposes for learning English and/or practical uses of English did not seem to be present during their years of learning the subject-matter. When purpose and meaning are absent, there is little motivation to learn the subject-matter (English) in depth or to retain what is learned. This is especially true with regards to rote learning and memorization.There is often a need to do a great deal of review each year to try to remember what was once memorized. We wondered if the fourteen years of learning English, reported by all of the respondents, were more like one year learned fourteen times.

Perhaps, as a result of the inadequacies of their English language classes, all respondents reported that they experienced the burden of feeling embarrassed to practice English due to the fear of making mistakes; therefore they all admitted to very poor conversation skills in English. Even though they are mature university students there seems to be an almost desperate need for positive and frequent reinforcement to overcome the feeling of incompetence.

Participants in this study reported that they rarely read even in their native language. One respondent, who characterized herself as "shy," indicated that she enjoys being with her family and does not adapt easily to other people. Why would she want to learn English, if she does not enjoy or adapt to people outside of her family? There is little incentive or motivation to communicate in a language other than her native language. However, she did indicate that it is beneficial to be bilingual, and actually used the word "shy" in her writing to describe a characteristic that parents of disabled children should not have, thereby indicating her awareness of the importance of effective communication.

When asked about their practices and process in writing university assignments in English, most of the respondents described good writing as knowing how to prepare an outline. Certainly, an outline is helpful in organizing thoughts. However, in the case of these L2 writers, accurately conveying meaning seems to be more of a priority learning need. Writing samples indicate that conveyance of that meaning is more thwarted by errors in syntax and morphology than by organizational issues.

Support for Language Learning and Writing

In the interviews, 8 out of 10 students indicated that helpful writing instruction for them includes vocabulary lists and step-by-step instruction. According to a writing instructor at the UAEU who was the coordinator of all teachers and duties included frequent meetings with instructors and evaluating students' strengths and weaknesses, studentsexpect writingto be more like fill-in-the blank exercises with one right answer. They tend to think of writing as parts–vocabulary, grammar, organization, and meaning. The following quote taken from one of the students expresses how the students learned English in their school years.

"No one has ever taught us how to write. The teacher used to write for us and ask us to memorize it. If we couldn't memorize compositions, we would cheat. There was never any form of relationship between the vocabulary we had to memorize and the writing experiences we had and I am telling you the truth. As if each area (vocab. & writing) were separate from each other. So much focus on rote learning. Listening and speaking skills were never ever practiced and that's why when we join the university, most of us if not all of us face tremendous difficulty in

these areas. In fact, in our English classes at school, all questions and instructions were given to us in Arabic"

Having learned English in this way, as isolated skills, prior to entering the university, students are limited in their ability to put the various pieces together. This type of instruction probably leads students to overreliance on technology, as reported by students.In her own words, one of the students said,*"I guarantee you that almost all of us use online translator such as "Wafi" to translate or to copy from websites."*While most indicated they use grammar check on the computer, our conclusions are that it is not helpful and they quickly give it up due to the complex nature of the errors. In other words, even though participants report using grammar check, their writing does not indicate that they understand how to correct or why the correction is indicated.

The respondents also indicated their use of spell check; however, the writing analyses clearly indicate the need for focused academic vocabulary instruction.The words may be spelled correctly, but often the wrong word form (orthography) was used and in some cases, an entirely different phonetic word ("rule" for "role" and "low" for "law") was used.Word form is taught intensively in English courses. Students seem to know the proper word form in grammar or vocabulary exercises, but fail to catch the errors in initial writing drafts and minimal rewrites. While vocabulary instruction in specific content courses may not be common, it is important for these L2 learners to enable deeper understanding of the readings in their chosen career as well as to improve their academic writing proficiency.Charts with word derivationsmight help to show how and where different word forms are used (e.g., teach, teacher, teaching, taught).

Following is an example from one L2 student whose sentence does not read well due to syntactic and semantic errors. "*These are the two kind of the principals in the schools, after these all things, now we know that the leadership can be learn not get it, also the good management didn't depend on the experience, maybe they learn some things from their experience but it's not necessary because many principals they are new but good than old principals so this things prove our opinion".*

Short and simple sentences would better convey the ideas and be easier to construct. The entire second half of this student's writing, after this sentence, was redundant. It is as if the writer thinks that the more she writes, the better it is. This draft seems like more of a brainstorming of ideas. Constructing a simple outline or lists of ideasprior to writing would likely help to organize the thoughts into a more coherent paragraph. This writer actually made such a list later in the essay. The process of writing can be different for each writer. Some brainstorm and then organize their thoughts, while others organize and outline prior to putting complete thoughts on paper. Either way, multiple drafts are necessary to lead to a well-developed essay or

paragraph. Because these writers need practice and multiple drafts, it seems prudent for instructors to require such process-oriented writing in all of their assignments, including e-mails and reading responses.

When students are required to provide multiple drafts of their writing, they employ multiple methods for seeking feedback. Five of the nine participants reported seeking outside help with editing. Three others reported infrequent use of outside help, while one indicated that she had not used outside editors except in her English courses. Seven of the nine participants reported that they exchange papers with classmates to seek help with editing, and six reported seeking help from classmates with regards to clarity in ideas. However, when asked how long it would take them to write a three-page paper in English, responses ranged from one to four hours with most reporting two to two and a half hours. Only one respondent indicated that she would take two hours to outline and two to write for a total of four hours. None of the respondents indicated time for rewriting and revising multiple drafts in this space of time.

Concurrently, there seems to be a need to provide more guided practice within the context of courses for speaking, reading, and writing English. Students do not practice revision and rewriting when left to their own resources, and all seem to feel they need support. According to Abu-Rabia and Siegel (2002) orthographic skills are considered language specific and different languages are characterized by different and unique orthographic writing rules. Therefore, improving orthographic language awareness requires learners to be exposed to the specific complex orthographic rules of the target language in a direct, systematic, and extensive manner. The more supported practice, the more improvement, and the less stress learners should feel.

One participant remarked that she would like for her teachers to "teach us a simpler way to write." Most of the interviewees indicated that they respond to positive reinforcement as well as positive criticism, actually appreciating someone who points out mistakes and offers ways to fix them. Another respondent indicated that while she feels unsuccessful with speaking English, she would like to have required presentations in front of the class to help build her confidence.

Concluding Remarks

Acquisition of skills without deeper understanding does not equate to true learning (Kirby & Lawson, 2012; Moats, 1995, 1999, 2009). In this small-scale study, we were concerned with the deeper emotional and attitudinal issues that can be underlying inhibitors to proficiency. We began with the idea that analysis of errors(see figure 1) in writing would help to target writing instruction. We believe that when there is a great

deal of improvement that needs to occur, it may be too much to try to cover everything all at once. It could be overwhelming.

Swales (1985) recommended the use of the term English for specific purposes (ESP) when designing courses, and for purposes of this study, we use that term also for designing content specific writing instruction in a particular writing genre. The writing genre is academic English discourse in education courses. Swales argued that if we are to address the needs of second language learners in the reading of academic English texts, we must consider both content schemata (background knowledge) and formal schemata (knowledge of text structure). Similarly, Graff and Birkenstien (2006) proposed that there are specific strategies that writers use in academic writing. Such strategies include transitions, rhetorical devises, typical introductory sentences for agreeing and disagreeing with an author, etc. Teaching the writing strategies that match the genre of academic writing are essential to improving academic English proficiency.

As Swales would argue, further tailoring the teaching to a specific class is even more beneficial. When targeting to a specific class, the importance of motivation in learning cannot be ignored. Therefore, we conducted interviews to determine the efficacy levels and attitudes toward the subject matter – English writing. Writing matters for student academic achievement in schools and long-term educational and career outcomes; however, findings from the current study have shown that teachers are not well prepared to teach writing and do not always value the subject matter.

Consequently, we recommend that teachers of second language learners design imbedded curriculum and supporting elements to Academic English Writing throughout the curriculum.Expecting second language learners to write the language without consistent teaching of the language can become a situation for practicing errors rather than correcting them. Teachers need more knowledge in grammar function and writing content, knowledge in writing instruction based on students' problems, knowledge for how to support students who struggle, and support bridging research evidence to practice in field. The findings of the present study could provide teacher educators with practical ideas for teacher preparation curriculum and programs regarding writing instruction for L2 students. Future research needs to look into teacher preparation or professional development curricula to improve teachers' knowledge of English writing instruction as well as instructional practices in teaching writing for L2 students. Furthermore, in order to inform teacher education programs about what may be missing from the teacher education curriculum in regards to teaching writing as well as bilingualism, a study needs to be conducted to examine pre-service teachers' knowledge and skills of writing instruction and how teacher educators can best prepare them.

References

Aaron, P. G., Joshi, R. M., &Quatroche, D. (2008). *Becoming a professional reading teacher*. Baltimore, MD: Paul Brookes.

Abu-Rabia, S. (2001). The role of vowels in reading Semitic scripts: Data from Arabic and Hebrew. *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal, 14*, 39-59.

Abu-Rabia, S. (2004). Teachers' role, learners' gender differences, and FL anxiety among seventh-grade students in studying English as a FL. *Educational Psychology, 24*, 711-721.

Abu-Rabia, S.,& Siegel, L. (2002). Reading, syntactic, and working memory skills of bilingual Arabic-speaking children. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research, 31*, 661-678.

Abu-Rabia, S.,& Taha, H. (2004). Reading and spelling error analysis of native Arabic dyslexic readers. *Reading and Writing: An InterdisciplinaryJournal, 17,* 651-689.

Abu DhabiEducation Council (ADEC, 2010).*New schoolmodel.* Retrievedfromhttp://www.adec.ac.ae/English/Pages/Schools.aspx?LinkId=cxmKDhwpHbXtBqP1OszvQw

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifyingtheoryofbehavioralchange. *PsychologicalReview, 84,* 191-215.

Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York, NY: Freeman and Company.

Bong, M., &Skaalvik, E. M. (2003). Academic self-concept and self-efficacy: How different are they really? *Educational Psychology Review, 15,* 1–40.

Brown, S. D., & Lent, R. W. (2006). Preparing adolescents to make career decisions:A social cognitive perspective. In F. Pajares& T. Urdan (Eds.), *Adolescence andEducation: Self-efficacy beliefs of adolescents* (Vol. 5, pp. 201–223). Greenwich, CT:Information Age.

Chamot, A.U.,& O'Malley, M. (1994). *The CALLA handbook: Implementing cognitive academic language learning approach.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Coker, D. & Lewis, W. (2008). Beyondwriting next: A discussion of writing research and instructional certainty. *Harvard Educational Review, 78,* 231-251.

Cummins, J. (1991). Interdependence of first and second language proficiency in bilingual children. In E. Bialystock (Ed.), *Language processing in bilingual children* (pp. 70-89). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Cummins, J. (1992). *Language proficiency, bilingualism, and academic achievement*. In P.A. Richard-Armato,& M.A. Snow (Eds.), *The multicultural classroom: Readings for content-area teachers* (pp. 16-26). New York, NY: Longman.

Cummins, J. (1999). BICS and CALP: Clarifying the distinction. Retrieved from ERIC database.

Cummins, J. (2009). Forward: Pedagogies of choice: challenging coercive relations of power in classrooms and communities. *International journal of bilingual education and bilingualism,12,* 261-271.

Dewaele, J. M. (2001). Tongue-tied in a foreign language. *The Linguist, 40*, 153-155.

Dewaele, J.M., Petrides, K. V., & Furnham, A. (2008). Effects of trait emotional intelligence and sociobiographical variables on communicative anxiety and foreign language anxiety among adult multilinguals: A review and empirical investigation. *Language Learning*, *58*, 911-960.

Graff, G.,& Birkenstein, C. (2006) *They say I say: The moves that matter in academic writing*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.

Horwitz, E., Horwitz, M.,& Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroomanxiety. *Modern LanguageJournal*, *70,* 125-132.

Jambor, P. Z. (2007). English language imperialism: Points of view. *Journal of English as an International Language, 1*, 103–123.

Joshi, R. M., Binks, E., Hougen, M., Dahlgren, M., Dean, E., & Smith, D. (2009). Why elementary teachers might be inadequately prepared to teach reading. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 42*, 392-402.

Klassen, R. (2004). A cross-cultural investigation of the efficacy beliefs of South Asianimmigrant and Anglo non-immigrant early adolescents. *Journal of EducationalPsychology, 96*, 731-742.

Kirby, J. R. & Lawson, M. J. (2012). *Enhancing the quality of learning*.Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Krashen, S.D. (1984). *Principles and practices*. New York, NY: Pergamon Press.

Lee , J. &Schallert, D.(1997). The relative contribution of L2 language proficiency and L1 reading ability to L2 reading performance: A test of the Threshold Hypothesis in an EFL context. *TESOL Quarterly, 31,* 713-739.

McCutchen, D., Abbott, R. D., et al. (2002). Beginning literacy: Links among teacher knowledge, teacher practice, and student learning. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 35*, 69-86.

McCutchen, D., &Berninger, V. W. (1999). Those who know, teach well: Helping teachers master literacyrelated subject-matter knowledge. *Learning Disabilities:Research & Practice, 14*, 215-226.

McCutchen, D., Green, L., & Abbott, R. D. (2009). Further evidence for teacher knowledge: Supporting struggling readers in grades three through five. *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal, 22*, 401-423.

Moats, L. C. (1995). The missing foundation in teacher education. *American Educator, 19*, 43-51.

Moats, L. (1999). *Teaching reading is rocket science*. Washington, DC: American Federation of Teachers.

Moats, L. (2009). Still wanted: Teachers with knowledge of language. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 42,* 5, 387-391.

Pajares, F. (1996). Role of self-efficacy beliefs in the mathematical problem-solvingof gifted students. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 21,* 325-344.

Pajares, F. (2000). Self-efficacy beliefs and current directions in self-efficacy research. Retrieved fromhttp://www.emory.edu/EDUCATION/mfp/effpage.html

Pajares, F. &Urdan, T. (Eds.). (2006). *Adolescence and education: Vol. 5. Self-efficacybeliefs of adolescents.* Greenwich, CT: Information Age.

Palmer, B., El-Ashry, F., Leclere, J., & Chang, S. (2007). Learning from Abdullah: A case study of an Arabic-speaking child in a U.S. School. *The Reading Teacher,61*(1), pp. 8-17.

Quirk, R. (1985). *The English language in global context*. In R.Quirk, R. and H. Widdoson, (Eds.), *English in the world: Teaching and learning the language and literatures*(pp. 1-6). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Scarcella, R. C. (2003). *Accelerating Academic English: A Focus on English Language Learners.* Regents of University of California, CA.

Schleppegrell, J., &Colombi, M. (2002). *Developing Advanced Literacy in First and Second Languages: Meaning with power.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Swales, J. (1985). Genre analysis and its application to languages for specific purposes. In: Proceedings of the Eastern Michigan Conference for Business and the Professions. ERIC ed. 271-991.

The Ministry of Education (2008). *Educational policy document*, The Ministry of Education. Dubai.

UNDP and Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum. (2012). *The Arab Knowledge Report 2010/2011: Towards productive intercommunication for Knowledge*. Al-Ghurair Printing and Publishing House, Dubai. Retrieved from http://204.200.211.31/Update_March_2012/AKR%202011/AKR_%20English.PDF

Usher, E. L., &Pajares, F. (2006). Inviting confidence in school: Invitations as a criticalsource of the academic self-efficacy beliefs of entering middle school students.*Journal of Invitational Theory and Practice, 12,* 7-16.

Usher, E., &Pajares, F. (2008). Sources of self-efficacy in school: Critical review of the literature and future directions. *Review of Educational Research, 78*, 751-796.

UNESCO.(2010). *Education for all, global monitoring report, reaching the marginalized*. New York, NY: Oxford UniversityPress.

Vellutino, F. R., Scanlon, D. M., & Jaccard, J. (2003). Toward distinguishing between cognitive and experiential deficits as primary sources of difficulty in learning to read: A two-year follow-up of difficult to remediate and readily remediated poor

readers. In B. R. Foorman (Ed.), *Preventing and remediating reading difficulties: Bringing science to scale* (pp. 73-120). Baltimore, MD: York Press.

Zughoul, M. R. (1999). The language of higher education in Jordon: Conflicts, challenges and innovative accommodation. Retrieved from *Educational Resources Information Center* (ED 479-747).

Zughoul, M. R.,& Abdul-Fattah, H. S. (2003). Collocational strategies of Arab learners of English: A study in lexical semantics. Retrieved from Educational Resources Information Center (ED 479-476).

Appendix A

Academic English Reading and Writing Interview Protocol

Background

1. Tell me about yourself as a student.
    a. What was your ITLES score?
    b. What were your grades in your English courses at the university?
    c. Throughout your education, what would you say has been your best subject in school? Why? What has been your favorite subject?
    d. What subject do you feel is your weakest? Why? What has been your least favorite subject?
2. Tell me a little bit about yourself.
    a. What sort of personality do you have?
    b. What sorts of things do you enjoy doing outside of school?

First language learning experiences and self-efficacy

3. I am going to ask you some questions about language learning.
    a. What was your first language?
    b. How would you describe your experiences in school learning to read and write "Arabic (or other first language)?"
    c. What sort of work habits did you have in elementary and high school when learning your native language?
    d. As a young student, did you read and write in Arabic for pleasure, or only for school purposes?
    e. If you were asked to rate your ability, including reading and writing at an academic level, in your first language on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest), where would you be? Why?

English language learning experiences and self-efficacy

4. I am going to ask you some questions about English language learning.
    a. When did you begin learning English?
    b. How long have you been using English?
    c. In what types of settings do you use English?
    d. How would you describe the way English was taught? Was the teacher a native English speaker? Were there lots of reading and writing experiences?
    e. Why did you learn English?

f. If you were asked to rate your ability in English on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest), where would you be? Why? How would you rate your confidence in your academic English reading abilities? How would you rate your confidence in your academic English writing abilities?
g. Tell me about a time when you experienced difficulty with English language reading or writing. How did you deal with it?

Academic English learning environment

5. Tell me about the experiences you have had in the university setting using academic English.
   a. What sorts of things do you have to read in English? On average, how much do you have to read in English on a daily basis? On a scale of 1 (very difficult) to 10 (very easy), how would you rate the difficulty of the reading?
   b. What sorts of things do you have to write in English? On average, how much do you have to write in English on a daily basis? On a scale of 1 (very difficult) to 10 (very easy), how would you rate the difficulty of the writing?
   c. What sorts of things do your teachers tell you about your abilities in English writing?
   d. How do your teachers make you feel about your English writing ability?
   e. Describe the best teacher you have had who helped you to be a better academic English reader and writer. What made that teacher so good?
   f. What could your current teachers do to help you improve your academic English reading and writing?
   g. What could your current teachers do to help you feel more confident in your academic English reading and writing?
   h. Under what conditions do you feel most successful in using academic English? Under what conditions do you feel least successful in using academic English? Why?

Academic English Writing Process

6. Describe your process when writing a formal academic paper in English.
   a. How do you learn and use difficult vocabulary?
   b. Do you talk about your ideas before writing them down?
   c. Do you use grammar and spell checking on the computer?
   d. Do you seek outside help with editing?
   e. Do you exchange papers with a classmate to offer each other help with editing?

f. Do you exchange papers with a classmate to offer each other help with clarity in ideas?
g. About how long would it take you to write a 3-page paper in English?
h. Do you receive any academic reading and writing instruction from your current teachers?

Affective and physiological response to English

7. I want to ask you to think about how English makes you feel. When you have to read in English, how does that make you feel? When you have to write in English, how does that make you feel?
8. Earlier you rated your English reading and writing ability on a scale of 1 to 10. How would you rate your confidence? Why? What could make you feel more confident about yourself and your academic English writing ability?

Appendix B

Coding Identification of Prominent English to Arabic Errors

Code	English	Arabic
O-1	Though bound and free morphemes are presented in English, the system is differentfrom Arabic morphological system. English has a linear process for morphology (e.g., un+believe+able"	Arabic has both linear and nonlinear morphology. Words are derived by the process of interleaving the consonantal root onto different word patterns. The roots carry the basic meaning, while word patterns mainly provide the syntactic function of the word..
O-2	Vowels are letters of the alphabet. One vowel letter, however, represents multiple vowel phonemes.	Short vowels are diacritical marks attached to consonants; for this reason, some linguists consider Arabic to be a syllabic rather than an alphabetic language. Long vowels are expressed in Arabic by using letters; however, each letter represents a single long vowel phoneme.
S-1	All sentences contain a verb.	Noun sentences do not contain a verb (e.g. student smart).
S-2	Contains verbs for 'to be' and 'to have'.	Although there is verb to be, Arabic nominal sentences can be grammatically correct without verb "to be".has Arabic has no verb for 'to have'.
S-3	Tenses of regular verbs are indicated by suffixes or by helping verbs.	Tenses in Arabic are expressed by a nonlinear morphological process whereby the root is interleaved onto different word patterns.
S-4	It has articles a, an, and the.	It has one article, al-(close in meaning to the), but no articles similar to a or an.
S-5	Run-on sentences.	Arabic consists of long poetic sentences with much elaboration and description.
S-6	Subject-verb agreement	
V-1	Word forms for frequently used academic vocabulary	

Note: The letter O in the coding system indicates an orthographic error, the S indicates a syntactical error, and the V indicates vocabulary.