

Arabic Writing Challenges Faced by Students in Collegiate 1 of Al Jamea Tus Saifiyah, Nairobi Campus, Kenya

¹Murtaza Patanwala and ²Dr. Shem M'wala
The Catholic University of Eastern Africa - Nairobi

ABSTRACT:

Writing is a multi-faceted activity and often regarded as a daunting task. This is because writing factors in various mental and cognitive challenges to students. Therefore, many studies have discussed different approaches to teaching writing in an anticipation to address such challenges and suggest meaningful ways to overcome them. This article is an action research which attempts to identify various challenges students face in acquiring essay writing skills and executing those skills. Adopting a survey research design, 100 students out of total population consisting 228 students studying in collegiate 1 of Aljamea Tus Saifiyah, Nairobi campus, Kenya were sampled using Stratified random sampling technique. This constituted more than 40% of the student's total population. A self-administered and semi-structured questionnaire was employed as an instrument to gather data from the students. The test-retest technique of reliability test was used to ascertain the reliability of the findings.

The data obtained was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17. Analyzing the data acquired, using various frequency tables and pie graphs, revealed that majority of the students face challenges in adhering to the norms of Arabic grammar and lack adequate syntactical knowledge to furnish a well-structured, cohesive piece of writing. The study recommended that teachers should have an integrated approach to writing; since it has been proven to enhance writing among other methods. Moreover, it also recommended that teachers' workshop should be frequently conducted to acquaint them with necessary skills to teach writing more effectively and eliminate any potential challenges faced by students.

KEYWORDS: writing, challenges, essay writing, Arabic, writing skills, al Jamea Tus Saifiyah Nairobi

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I. INTRODUCTION:

The two most important external characteristics of human behavior are expression and communication (Gelb, 1963). Through communication human beings are able to socialize and interact with the outer world. One of the important mediums of communication is through writing. According to Robert Todd Carroll writing is the most important invention in the human history. This is because writing serves to provide a relatively permanent record of information. Additionally, writing as a medium to communicate, transcends the time to interact with the future generations. It permits people from the near and far distant past to speak to each other.

Similarly, outlining the significance of writing in the human world, Gelb (1963), quoting James H. Breasted, a famous Chicago historian and orientalist, has stated that the invention of writing and of convenient system of records on paper has had a greater influence on uplifting the human race than any other intellectual achievement in the career of men. Gelb (1963) further states that in context of the modern world writing is so integral that one could not imagine existence without it. Although writing is a mode of communication akin to speech, the psychological, linguistic and cognitive demands associated with writing make it peculiar (Byrne, 1993). Unlike speaking, as Elena Diana citing Kaplan states, writing is not an inborn skill or capacity (POPA, 2013). Grabowski (1996), as cited in (Weigle, 2009) notes that writing, as compared to speaking, can be seen as a more standardized system which must be acquired through special instruction. This is because writing has several aspects. It is multi-faceted. It includes acquiring a system of signs/symbols, language specific rules, awareness of the writing process, and gaining a full command of the linguistic resources. Moreover, learning to write involves development at many stages ranging from low level aspects like handwriting and spelling to higher level aspects such as syntax and semantics, converged during planning of different types of writing (Miller, McCardle, & Connelly, 2018).

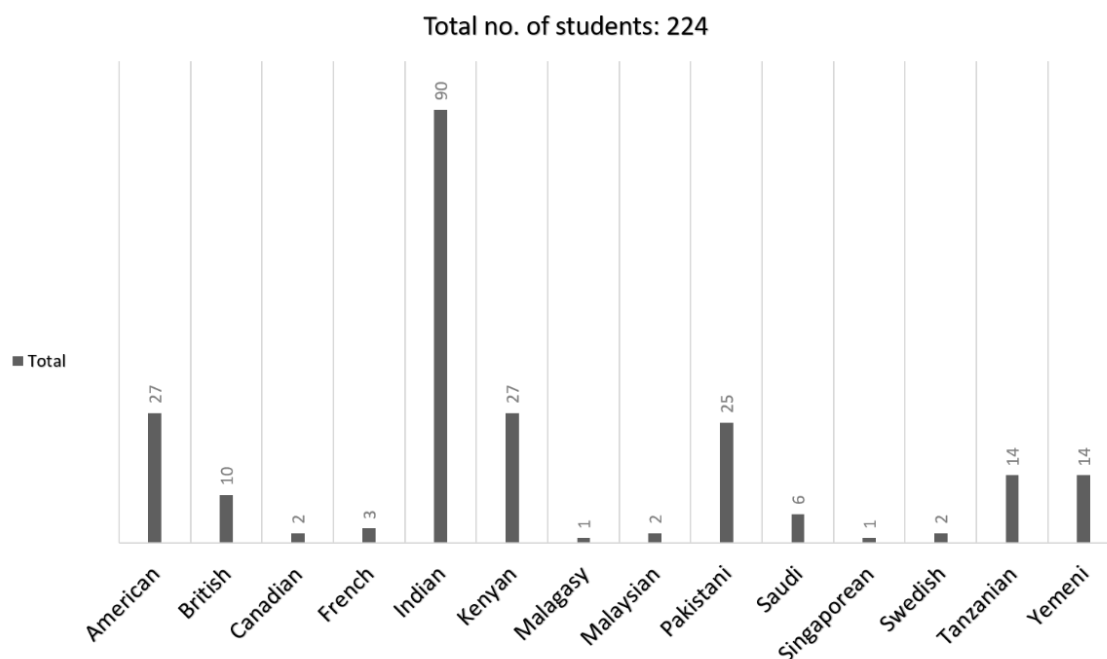
Writing is a complex activity that demands optimal performance of human brain (Emig, 1977). This complexity is highly accentuated if one is asked to write in a second language context. This is because writing in second language entails its own set of complications in the form of proficiency in the target language, knowledge regarding the genres and associated socio-cultural expectations of target language, and lastly

interaction between the writer's L1 experiences and the meaning of literacy in the target language culture (Archibald, 2001).

Owing to such complexities involved in writing, students encounter writing difficulties in second language essay writing. It must be noted here that writing plays a pivotal role in the current academic milieu. Good writing, as a medium to self-expression and action is beyond merely a medium of communication. Perhaps it enables one to explore, understand and formulate elusive and complex ideas. Moreover, it is an integral part of the assessment process that enables students to propel in their academic endeavors (Davis, Swinburne, & Williams, 2006). Therefore, as noted by Bee-Hoon Tan, student's weak writing ability may put their academic success at risk (Tan, 2011).

Al Jamea Tus Saifiyah, a principal educational institute of Dawoodi Bohra community in Nairobi, Kenya, is an international institute that accommodates more than 700 students from diverse nationalities. Moreover, the Collegiate I, comparable to higher secondary school, alone comprises of 224 students from 14 different nationalities. This diversity can be depicted in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1 Students' diverse nationalities



According to the policies and guidelines of the academy, all the teachers are supposed to instruct in Arabic as a primary medium of instruction. Moreover, students of the collegiate I, which consists of standards 5 to 7 of Aljamea, are required to submit stipulated number of essays in each academic year as a part of curriculum (Al Jamea Tus Saifiyah, 2014). The following table 1 provides an overview of the essays that students are required to submit throughout the academic year.

Table 1 Overview of the essays written throughout the academic year
Collegiate I (Standard 5 - 7)

Standard	Essays to be written in Arabic	Length (In Words)	Total Marks	Marking Criteria	
5	7	1200	50	Content and Analysis	15 Marks
6	7	1200	50	Language	20 Marks
	6	2000	50	Presentation	15 Marks
7	1 (Extended Essay)	3000-4000	100	Content and Analysis	30 Marks
				Structure and Organization	30 Marks
				Language proficiency	30 Marks
				Referencing	10 Marks

This exemplifies the amount of practice a student requires in order to meet their academic requirements. Another potential problem pertaining to the composition writing in Collegiate I of Aljamea is that there is no special assessment module or examination to evaluate the writing competency of the students, save the semester examinations and the annual examinations. It is apparent that a students' writing competency cannot be adjudged through an examination performance. This is because, in examinations students write under various circumstances which make their written papers unlikely to be a testament to their actual writing ability. Additionally, the yearly essays, which a student is obligated to submit, do not serve as a testimony to their writing ability as well, because the number of the students and the workload upon the teachers make the markings significantly unreliable. Teachers, due to the time factor, may overlook the essential marking criteria in an anticipation to finish the work duly. Moreover, no research has been conducted so far to address this issue while exploring the challenges faced by the students in writing Arabic compositions.

It is against this background that the study sought to identify the challenges faced by students in writing Arabic composition in Collegiate I of Aljamea, Nairobi, Kenya.

Statement of the problem

The ability to write effectively and proficiently is of paramount significance in every educational setting (Davis, Swinburne, & Williams, 2006). Moreover, the complexities entailed in second language writing make writing a rather difficult skill to acquire and master as remarked by Schoonen, Snellings, Stevenson, & Gelderen (2009) referring to the Levelt's model, which shall be discussed in depth in Chapter 2. These complexities are further accentuated in an institute that accommodates students with diverse nationalities and backgrounds. Hence, it is tantamount to identify challenges, if any, that students in Collegiate I of Aljamea tus Saifiyah are facing in writing Arabic essays and how those challenges can be addressed through integrating different approaches to writing which have been scientifically evaluated and appraised. Presumably, a study with such an intent bears the potential to suggest effective measures that might aid in overcoming student's difficulties in writing, while enhancing their ability to write effectively. Additionally, it may also serve as a report that highlights the challenges faced by teachers in teaching writing. Therefore, this study is an attempt to investigate the difficulties that students of collegiate 1 in Al Jamea Tus Saifiyah, Nairobi, face in attaining proficiency in writing Arabic compositions.

Theoretical Framework

This study was based on Process Genre approach theoretical model proposed by Richard Badger and Goodith White in 2000 which was published in the 54th volume of ELT journal. According to the proponents of this approach the ostensible conflict between the product, process and genre approach to writing is misguided. Instead, they suggest that all the three approaches are largely complementary (Badger & White, 2000). This becomes apparent if one examines the strengths and weaknesses of each approach.

It is a matter of a fact that each approach has its own strengths and shortcomings as well. However, if the strengths of these approaches, as suggested by Badger and White (2000), are synthesized, a more integrated and holistic approach takes shape. This is, in fact, evident from a review of literature done to compare the efficacy of process and product approach to writing in Malaysian school context (Thulasi& Ismail, 2014). This study suggested that it was improbable to find a one-size-fits-all model of writing instruction. Hence, designing activities by blending the process approach with product approach will be more effective rather than focusing on a single approach.

The fundamental idea underlying the Process Genre approach is that it has sought to integrate the knowledge about language (as in product and genre approaches), knowledge of context which addresses the purpose of the writing (as in genre approach) and linguistic skills like planning and drafting (as in process approach) (Badger & White, 2000).

In terms of development of writing in a Process Genre approach, Badger and White (2000) suggest that it may vary according to the knowledge base of the learner. This is because learners are at different stages of their writing development. Hence, learners who know a lot about the production of a particular genre, and are skilled in it, may need little or no input. As identified by Badger and White, the input can be drawn on three potential sources: the teacher, other learners and examples of the target genre. The teacher may provide input as instructing learners, other learners may do the same in form of group discussions, but perhaps the most significant can be drawn from samples of targeted genre as they aid specifically in contextual and linguistic knowledge. Hence, resorting to such an approach implies achieving good communicative competence in writing and assisting students widen their skills in using language as well as gain knowledge from model texts (Ferris D.R, 2010 as cited in Thulasi& Ismail, 2014). The Process Genre approach is being widely acclaimed for its integrated approach to writing. It allows students to study the relationship between purpose and form for a particular genre as they use recursive processes of pre-writing, drafting, revision and editing. In course of these steps, it is likely that the students develop their intellect regarding different text types and their composing

processes (Belbase 2012, as cited in Ghufron, 2016). Hence, as Ghufron (2016) states, through this approach students are prepared with sufficient input consisting of knowledge about language, context and purpose before they undergo the process of writing.

On the other hand, a potential weakness of Process-Genre approach can be that it requires a lot of time. This is because Process-Genre approach has incorporated the genre approach while upholding the essentials of the process approach. It is a fact that some researchers, as suggested in Thulasi & Ismail (2014), have noted that teachers consider the process approach to be time consuming. Literature, further exemplifies that process approach involves several drafts before students produce the final draft. This potential weakness, however, reflects the true way of writing as proposed in Ghufron (2016). Mac Donald and Mac Donald (1996, as cited in Ghufron 2016) have stated that writing is not a single event but a process. Although it is a lengthy process, it assures a clearer, more logical and thoughtful product.

Review of Related Literature:

This section presents some of the ongoing discussions and empirical studies upon writing in second language, particularly, in Arabic language. It shall highlight the fact that writing in second language has always posed challenges for students on various grounds. However, these challenges can be eliminated if addressed with apt strategies.

Intricacies of Second Language Writing

In general, a review of empirical studies over the past two decades regarding the literature available on second language writing has been authored by Cummin (2001). This review has expanded upon three main facets of second language writing. These can be stated as follows:

- a) The qualities of texts learners produce.
- b) The processes involved in students' writing activity.
- c) The specific socio-cultural contexts in which this learning occurs.

Schoonen, Snellings, Stevenson, & Gelderen (2009) have highlighted the complex nature of writing in their work. They have resorted to the Levelt's model to underline various processes involved in writing process. According to Levelt's model of spoken language production, the language production process can be subdivided into three major components. These are conceptual preparation (including planning), linguistic formulation and physical production. In this model, formulating consists of two major subcomponents; grammatical and phonological encoding. Grammatical encoding pertains to the construction of clauses and sentences in terms of vocabulary selection and sentence building. In order to translate the prepositions into language, the words selected from the mental lexicon have to be put together in a grammatically correct and pragmatically adequate way, so that coherence and cohesion are maintained. Due to these complexities, writing in second language is much harder and more time consuming than in the native language. The demand of metacognitive knowledge and language proficiency for a second language writer is comparatively high. Moreover, limited linguistic knowledge of the second language can hinder the use of metacognitive knowledge and writing experience. Therefore, below certain threshold of second language linguistic knowledge, the writer will be fully absorbed in struggling with the language, inhibiting the writing processes such as planning or monitoring.

An article authored by Kanakri (2016), has highlighted the academic writing challenges and needs of English as second language (ESL) students. This study, however in English language context, provides a brief outline for challenges students face in second language writing in general. This study, authored in Kent State University, Ohio, U.S.A., aimed to conduct an in depth understanding of the needs of ESL students in academic writing across all disciplines. Alluding towards the significance of writing ability of students in second language, this study observes that the increasing number of students, getting enrolled into various academic programs, entails the fact that students must learn and understand the norms, standards and procedures of academic writing in their field of study in order to be successful. This is because writing in most universities is the primary tool to assess and evaluate students' demonstration and understanding of their fields. It must be acknowledged that ESL students come from a variety of linguistic, cultural and educational backgrounds which suggests that these students may have varying needs and could face different challenges pertaining to the nature and function of discourse, audiences, and persuasive appeals that often differ across linguistic, cultural and educational contexts. This, in fact, befittingly relates to the context of the current research, where students are assumed to be facing challenges and difficulties in Arabic essay writing owing to the diverse demographic origins they come from.

The difficulties students face in writing ability is also pervasive in regional context of African continent. This is evident from a study, conducted by Pineteh (2014) in South Africa, aimed to discuss the academic writing challenges of undergraduate students in Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT).

The questions addressed to in the aforementioned study were to identify the academic writing challenges of undergraduate students in CPUT and investigate the reasons that led to such challenges. Using qualitative research method, the researcher conducted interviews with twenty 2nd year students in the Faculty of Informatics and Design. The participants comprised of 12 males and 8 females, generally between the ages of 19 and 25. The interviews were generally 20-30 minutes long. The questions were framed around students' writing skills, writing assignments, interactions with communication lecturers and so on. Additionally, two communication course reflections were facilitated with approximately 150 1st year students registered for the IT programme in the Faculty of Informatics and Design. The reflections concentrated on students' academic writing experiences and other relevant topics taught in the course. In the interviews and reflections, students were asked to comment on their academic writing strengths and weaknesses as well as on ways to improve their writing skills. Additionally, interviews were also conducted with Communication lecturers; one from the Department of Accounting in the Faculty of Business, two from the IT department and one from the Department of Town and Regional Planning. They were 2 males and two females, ages between 30 and 55.

The findings of the study revealed that the composition of CPUT was very diverse in terms of race, linguistic background, and cognitive development. Hence, students were seen struggling to cope with institutional literacy expectations, because the medium of instruction was English. As a result, it was difficult for the students to adjust and adapt themselves since English was not necessarily the native language of many students. Some of the challenges faced by students were evident in the slew of language; conceptual and stylistic flaws in scholarly papers submitted by CPUT students.

Hence, from the foregoing discussions and review of literature, this study sought to identify and investigate the difficulties students face in essay writing in Arabic language in Aljameatus Saifiyah, Nairobi campus, Kenya.

Learning Arabic as Second language:

Learning Arabic as a second language has accumulated good interest in the recent times. As observed by Facchin (2017), teaching Arabic as a foreign language (TAFL) has developed a rich scientific corpus of publications and practices all over the world for about fifty years. From a theoretical point of view, TAFL considers both the teacher's and learner's point of views, in pursuit of improvement and increased efficacy in the Arabic language classroom. By definition TAFL is addressed to students outside the Arab world and the Arabic speaking countries. Similarly, from a pedagogical point of view, TAFL class represents a particular case for the kind and quality of language inputs the teacher must provide to his students as understood by Stevens (2006, as cited in Facchin, 2017). Depending on the source language of the learners, studying Arabic demands different quantities of hours to attain a certain level of proficiency.

A study by Busaidi (2015) to review the available literature regarding Arabic language programs has highlighted some important features of Arabic language and the potential difficulties that learners might face. As noted by Busaidi (2015), Arabic is the official language of some twenty nations, stretching from the Atlantic coast of North Africa in the west to the Sultanate of Oman in the east, and from Syria in the north to Sudan in the south. Arabic belongs to the Semitic group of languages, and it is a synthetic rather than an analytic language. Therefore, there are significant differences between the structures of Arabic and Indo-European languages, such as English, Spanish, French, and German. Hence as observed by Holes (1995, as cited in Busaidi, 2015) Arabic has some characteristics that European languages do not, along with a very complex morphological system. Some researchers found that the characteristics of Arabic morphology caused difficulties for students of Arabic, as some could not make a link between the new word they learnt and its official root. This is because majority of Arabic words are derived from, and can be analyzed from their roots, which represent meaning. From an orthographical perspective, every letter in Arabic writing system is assembled in order to generate a meaning. Owing to the differences between Indo-European languages and Arabic, Fragman and Russak (2010, as cited in Busaidi, 2015) examined the Arabic spelling accuracy of native Hebrew adolescents in the eighth grade and found orthographic sources of difficulty. It was reported that pupils made spelling errors, as they were confused by similar looking Arabic letters, which are at times differentiated only by diacritical dots placed either above, below or inside the selected letters. Likewise, another difficulty faced by learners of Arabic as foreign language were due to its Right-to-Left orientation. It uses completely different script and directionality. It has been noted by Al-Juhany (1990, as cited in Busaidi, 2015) that this directionality is cognitively complex and requires restructuring one's way of thinking.

In line with the above, a regional study conducted by Sirajudeen & Adebisi (2012) has pointed out that the structural characteristics of Arabic language, its socio-cultural context and the teaching competencies of the language teachers pose a challenge that affect Arabic education in Nigeria.

For the review of above literature, one might conclude that learning Arabic as a second language has some challenges which are in line with the challenges posed by any second language learning endeavor.

Moreover, there are some peculiar characteristics intrinsic to Arabic as a language which brings into light another side of the story.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the survey research design. According to Creswell (2009), a survey design provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population. From the results obtained, the researcher generalizes claims about the population. Similarly, a descriptive research is concerned with how, what is or what exists is related to some preceding event that has influenced or affected a present condition or event. The target population consisted of 228 students from standard 5 to 7 in Collegiate I of Aljamea, Nairobi. Apart from others, the students of Collegiate I were deemed apt for two reasons. Firstly, the compulsion of Arabic as a writing medium is exercised as soon as a student enters into Collegiate I. Such compulsion exposes students to certain amount of difficulty in adapting with expressing in Arabic language. As a result, they are faced with challenges in efficiently executing their writing skills. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select students as respondents in the study. The students were stratified according to their grade of study and their gender to obtain accurate responses from standards 5 to 7 of Collegiate I, that are representative of the total population consisting of boys and girls. Hence, a total of 100 students out of 228 students studying in collegiate 1 of Aljamea, Nairobi, Kenya were selected.

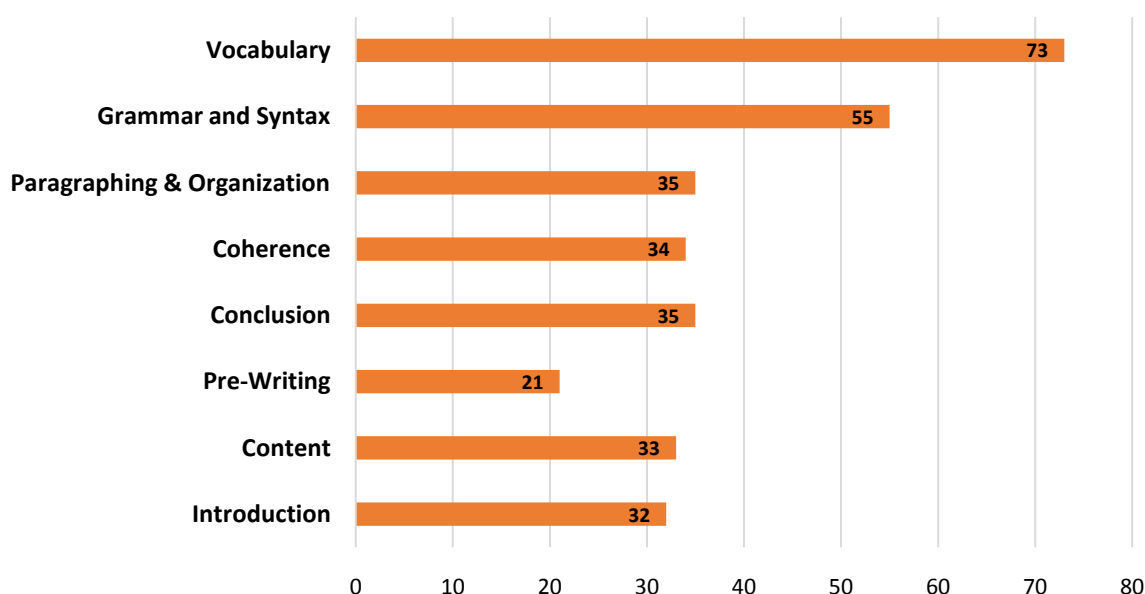
A self – administered and semi – structured questionnaire was employed as an instrument to gather data. According to Wilson and McLean (1994, as cited in Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007) a questionnaire is a widely used and useful instrument for collecting survey information. Moreover, questionnaires can be administered without the presence of the researcher, and often comparatively straightforward to analyze. The study administered a questionnaire that consisted of both closed and open-ended questions to generate efficient frequencies of responses that are consistent with appropriate statistical treatment and analysis, enabling the researcher further to make comparisons across groups in the sample. Similarly, open ended questions were also included to capture the specificity of a particular situation; as a reason that the open-ended questions enable respondents to answer as much as they wish, and are particularly suitable for investigating complex issues, to which simple answers cannot be provided as observed by Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2007).

Following the data collection procedures; the qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis by grouping the responses provided by respondents into various themes according to the objectives of the study. On the other hand, quantitative data was processed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS version 17.0). Employing descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages, the data was presented in forms of graphical charts.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The objective of the study was to identify the challenges faced by students in Arabic composition writing. The findings from the study are presented in the following section. Figure 7 gives an outline of the areas of challenges for students in writing Arabic composition.

Figure 2 Areas of challenges for students



The findings in Figure 7 reflect that majority of the students 73 (73%) face difficulty in vocabulary, while least challenging area was pre-writing activity where 21 (21%) students faced difficulty. Another major area of challenge was identified as grammar and syntax where 55 (55%) students reported to have faced difficulties. Other areas which include paragraphing and organization; coherence; conclusion; content mastery; and introduction have approximately equal number of students who seem to be facing difficulties. It is evident that majority of the students are facing challenges in acquiring appropriate linguistic knowledge to writing in Arabic language. It is apparent that Arabic is a language that has different morphological system than that of English or other European languages. To be an adept to such differences might not be easy for students with varying cognitive and mental capacities.

As stated earlier in the study, according to Pincas (1982, as cited in Badger and White, 2000), writing is primarily about linguistic knowledge, with appropriate use of vocabulary, syntax and cohesive devices. Hence, difficulties in acquiring and failing to execute one's linguistic knowledge appropriately and efficiently in a writing activity greatly degrades the quality of a written work. Moreover, as cited in Busaidi (2015), the characteristics of Arabic morphology caused difficulties for students of Arabic, as some could not make a link between the new word they learnt and its official root. This is because majority of Arabic words are derived from, and can be analyzed from their roots, which represent meaning. From an orthographical perspective, every letter in Arabic writing system is assembled in order to generate a meaning. As a result, pupils made spelling errors, as they were confused by similar looking Arabic letters, which are at times differentiated only by diacritical dots placed either above, below or inside the selected letters. Likewise, another difficulty faced by learners of Arabic as foreign language were due to its Right-to-Left orientation. It uses completely different script and directionality. It has been noted by Al-Juhany (1990, as cited in Busaidi, 2015) that this directionality is cognitively complex and requires restructuring one's way of thinking.

Additionally, the data analysis also reflected that students' approach to learning writing skills lacked proper procedures and it was observed that students didn't rely upon proper methods. Table 7 below supports the above claim.

Table 2 Methods students employ in learning writing skills

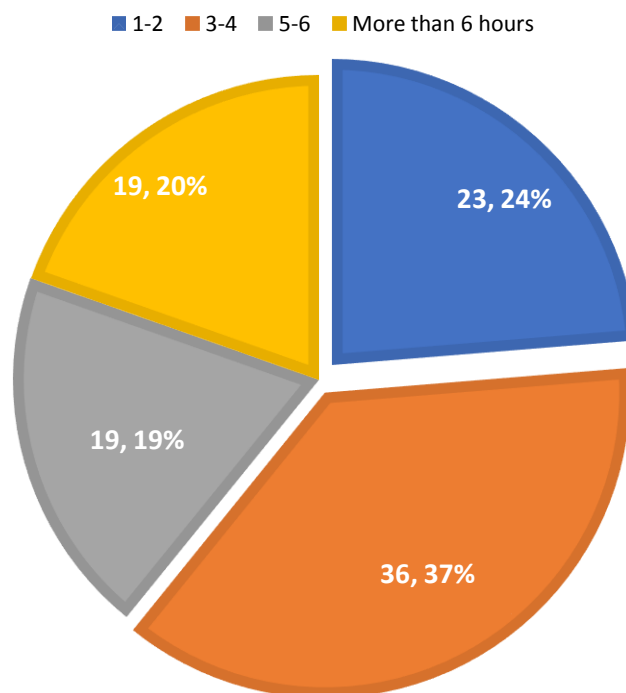
Method	Frequency							
	Frequently		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
How often do you brainstorm your essay topic with your teacher?	4	4%	34	34%	38	38%	24	24%
How often do you have group discussion on your essay topic?	8	8%	34	34%	25	25%	33	33%
How often do you rely on peer reviewing?	17	17%	27	27%	33	33%	19	19%
How often do you read model texts and try to imitate relevant vocabulary and language	21	21%	36	36%	17	17%	26	26%

Method	Frequency
style?	

The above results reflect that majority of the students 38 (38%) rarely brainstorm upon their topics with their respective teachers, whereas less than half of students 4 (4%) and 34 (34%) either ‘frequently’ or ‘sometimes’ respectively rely upon brainstorming. Similarly, only marginal number of students 8 (8%) had frequently discussed their topics in groups. Another important aspect of good writing involves peer reviewing and referring relevant language style and vocabulary. It was observed that majority of students 33 (33%) rarely peer reviewed their written works and 19 (19%) never actually did so. It is instructional in the writing process to follow certain strategies in order to attain proficiency in writing. The results above mirror the fact that there are inconsistencies in students’ approach to learn writing skills. Such inconsistencies are required to be examined and addressed in order to obtain desired level of proficiency in students writing performance.

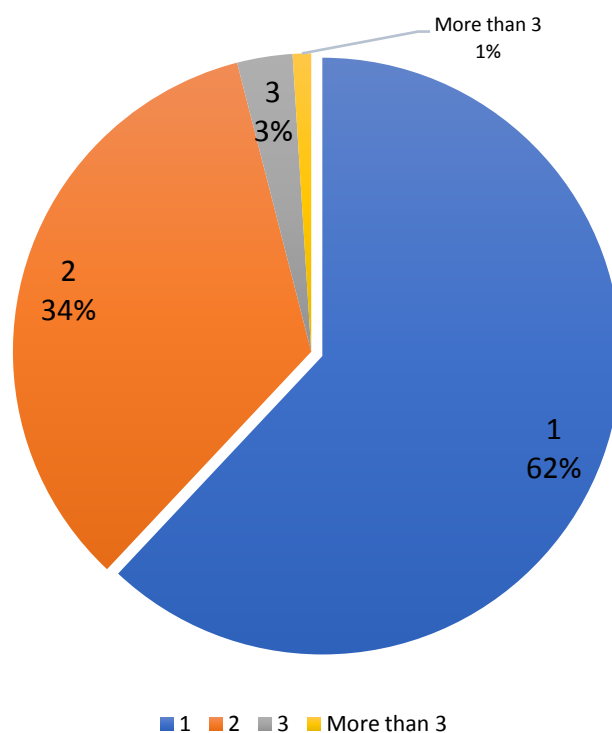
Moreover, these findings also reinforce the propositions made by Badger and White (2000). They contend that writing involves knowledge about language, knowledge of the context in which writing happens i.e. the purpose for the writing and skills in using language. Hence, an integrated approach to writing implies that students follow methods that address all the areas included in accomplishing a good writing task. Another challenge concerning the students writing difficulty can be understood from Figure 8, which gives an outline of the number of hours students consume in producing an essay.

Figure 3 Number of hours students spend on writing an Arabic essay



From the above figure, it is evident that majority of the students 60 (60%) take 1-4 hours in completing an Arabic essay and only few students 38 (38%) actually spend more than 5-6 hours in writing an essay, which can be considered as a minimum requirement for producing a properly crafted piece of writing. Majority of students taking less than 5 hours in producing a final written work is further justified by the data presented in Figure 9 below.

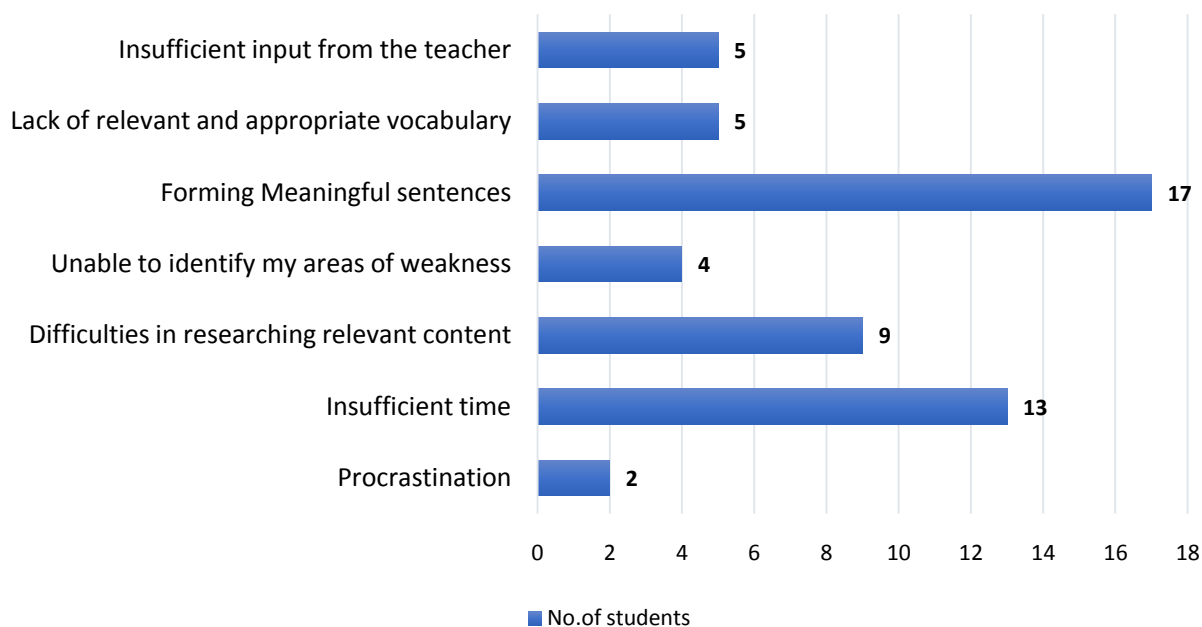
Figure 4 Number of times students rewrite their essay before producing the final draft



From the above figure one can observe that a significant number of students 62 (62%) rewrite their essay only once. On the other hand, only an insignificant 4 (4%) rewrite their essays more than thrice. This shows that majority of the students are unable to follow a particular method that might assist them in increasing their writing proficiency. Literature review of the empirical studies suggest that writing is a time-consuming activity which demands practice and a considerable amount of writing. This is in line with Mac Donald and Mac Donald (1996, as cited in Ghufon 2016) who have stated that writing is not a single event but a process. Although it is a lengthy process, it assures a clearer, more logical and thoughtful product. Hence, if the students are unable to spend sufficient time on a piece of writing the consequences of such an inadequateness is reflected in their poor competency in writing Arabic compositions.

In addition to the challenges highlighted above, the data also provided some additional challenges that students faced. These challenges are presented in the Figure 10 below.

Figure 5 Additional challenges students face



From the above data, it can be said that majority of the students 17 (17%) are unable to form meaningful sentences. Another area of challenge according to 13 (13%) of students is insufficient time. 5 (5%) of student believe that they don't receive sufficient input from their teachers, 5 (5%) lack the appropriate vocabulary required for writing an essay, 4 (4%) are of the opinion that they are unable to identify their areas of weakness, 9 (9%) believe that it is difficult for them to research relevant content material and only 2 (2%) think that procrastination is a challenge hindering their writing proficiency. The above stated challenges further reflects, as stated earlier, to the inadequacy of students in terms of linguistic skills and syntactical knowledge. These findings partially relate to those of Nyang'au (2014) whose study concluded that the majority of the teachers indicated that content mastery is the most challenging area in essay writing, others indicated the use of grammar and coherence, conclusion cited and vocabulary as challenging areas.

IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The study explored the areas of difficulty, students of Al Jamea Tus Saifiyah, Nairobi campus, Kenya, in Collegiate 1 face in Arabic composition writing. The data reflected that students were facing difficulties in acquiring appropriate vocabulary to express their ideas and complying with the grammatical conventions of Arabic language. Other areas of challenge included paragraphing and organization; coherence; conclusion; content mastery; and introduction.

From the above findings it can concluded that Arabic essay writing is a daunting task for some of the students; moreover, they are facing some challenges which needs to be addressed to in order to improve the learning environment and uplift the overall performance of students.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher found it necessary to make some recommendations following the summary, findings of the present research and the conclusions reached. These recommendations could be used to enhance the teaching and learning of second language essay writing skills in all the campuses of Aljamea Academy. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

Teachers should consider resorting to integrated approach to writing that focuses on students and provides a balanced approach to teaching writing skills. Similarly, Teachers of Arabic should lay emphasis on enhancing communicative competence in essay writing among students. This could be done through exposing students to good samples of writing using process-based approaches such as group discussion, role play, brainstorming, peer editing and debates in the teaching of writing skills. These have been proven to enhance writing among other methods.

Additionally, writing workshops must be frequently organized that focus upon acquainting the teachers with necessary skills in giving writing instructions to the students. This implies that teachers give much varied topics to write upon that provoke thinking and debating. Moreover, teachers must be made aware of the

techniques of giving constructive feedback that aid students and given them focus to improve in any area of writing.

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