

EMPLOYING THE WRITER'S VOICE FOR IMPROVING THE WRITING ABILITIES OF THE SAUDI EFL LEARNERS

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Abstract. This qualitative study aims at highlighting the possible underlying reasons of the Saudi EFL learners' poor writing abilities. It also attempted to conceptualize the perceptions of university professors and Saudi EFL learners toward their current writing challenges. To achieve this purpose, three instruments namely, a) an in-depth interview, b) survey, and c) a discourse analysis of an EFL learners' writing sample were conducted. The sample of this study consisted mainly of (5) university professors and (50) EFL learners selected conveniently from one of the Saudi northern universities. The qualitative analysis of the collected data revealed that the low writing performance of the EFL learners was attributed to their low motivation, poorly constructed self-confidence, the focus on testing and frequent focus on correctness. It was also indicated that "unrelated" or "uninterested" writing topics for learners contributed to their poor writing proficiency levels. This study hypothesizes that exposing EFL learners to more free writing tasks that help them express their own voice, thoughts, ideas, persona, identity, etc would help them improve their writing abilities considerably. It also found that limited vocabulary, testing anxiety, poor instructional practices, and inter alia were the primary themes that led to poor writing skills of learners. This study recommends language instructors to focus more on fluency without fully discarding correctness as well as including humor, identity and 'self' concepts in teaching writing.

Keywords: Writer's voice, Writing Improvement, EFL learners, Saudi EFL, Poor Writing; Free writing.

INTRODUCTION

Learning English as second or foreign language has become a basic requirement for individuals to communicate with the world. Most non-speaking English countries are aware of this fact and that is why they incorporated English in their educational systems. The Arab world is not an exception in this regard. In order to satisfy their need for the latest technological and economic developments that can hardly be obtained without successful teaching and learning the linguistic communicative medium of English, these

countries provided their educational systems with considerable efforts, time and funds. However, despite this ample support, the outcomes of learning are still below expectations (Alshammari, 2022; Alshammari, 2021; Moskovsky, 2018; Ashraf, 2018; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). It has been suggested that to improve language learners' performance, a "sufficient" level of exposure to the four language skills is still required (Brown, 2000). This term, "sufficient", seems to be vague in that no one can identify for sure its level for any language learning process. It is unclear if it refers to EFL materials, learners' efforts, learning time, or even pedagogical interventions. The language interference or the impact of the mother tongue on the EFL learning process is also still not clear whether it facilitates or hinders the language learning development (Al-Khairi, 2013a; Elyas & Picard, 2010).

These factors are just examples of the variables that may influence the learning process of various language skills including the writing abilities of EFL learners. Therefore, the current study investigated the possible reasons of learners' low performance in writing as a language major skill that can significantly contribute to students' academic success. Writing is basically the ability to draw connected symbols that were arbitrarily known and comprehensible to authors and readers. Through the acquisition of writing skills, learners can express their ideas, thoughts, events, experiences, arguments and so on. It is reported that writing can also improve EFL learners' cognitive skills (Obler & Gjerlow, 1999). However, learners' low writing performance can be attributed to a variety of possible internal and external factors such as learner's motivation and testing systems (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). According to Wentzel and Brophy (2014), language learners may enjoy a sufficient level of motivation at the very initial stage of their learning; however, they turn to be demotivated as a result of being exposed to more tests and restricting school instructions.

More specifically, when it comes to the context of this research, which focuses on the Saudi EFL writing improvement, some empirical studies attempted to identify the most frequent writing issues and errors of Saudi English learners. For example, Alqhtani (2018) reported that the most writing errors of Saudi learners of English are syntactical, specifically preposition. To avoid this writing poor performance, it has been suggested that exposing language learners to as much as possible free-writing tasks, where the focus is shifted to be on fluency rather than accuracy, would be useful. Motivating language learners to write as much as they can would also improve the writing skills of learners as suggested by Eshghinejad (2016). It should also be taken into account that learning writing more effectively should consider the three levels of the writing process: the resource, process, and control (Chenoweth & Hayes, 2001) and that language learners can improve their writing through a comprehensible output (Haynes, 2007).

It has also been claimed that university students should be well-trained on impersonal, objective and informational writing (Rahimivand & Kuhi, 2014) in order to demonstrate highly-valued

features of literacy, relevance and politeness (Farrell, 1997).

Improving learners' writing skills this way is not only a matter of successful communication but also an indication of learners' ability to represent their voice in writing (Ivanič, 1998), reflecting their life histories and identity (Gee, 2008), and expressing confidence in their arguments and

commitment to their ideas” (Hyland, 2002). This means that the writer’s voice is not mere a neutral activity, but an activity that EFL learners can use to balance out their own voice with the many others’ norms (Ivanič, 1998).

Despite that the Saudi Arabian Universities offer advanced and developed educational plans that employ new modern teaching approaches and methods (Fallatah, 2016), their EFL learners’ writing abilities are not up to standards. This is the main drive for the need to investigate the underlying reasons of the low writing performance of these learners. Shedding light on these writing issues encountered by EFL learners would definitely help those learners, their instructors and the materials designers handle them more efficiently. To this end, this study attempts to answer these two main questions:

How do university students and professors perceive voice in writing?

How can exposing EFL learners to free writing with authentic voice improve their overall writing skills?

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section discusses the primary themes in the field of second or foreign language writing and to deepen understanding of the reasons that could hinder or enhance the overall writing skills of the Saudi EFL learners. It addresses first the default cultural communication in the Arab world and how this could impact the writing development of EFL learners. Ellen (1997) highlighted the possible primary themes that most Arab learners could share as “cultural communication patterns”. These themes were “(1) ... cultural values, (2) ... verbal communication, and (3) ... nonverbal patterns”. According to Ellen (1997), Arab societies can be described with a collectivistic nature which highlights the impact of others on the one’s self or other society members. Features of verbal communication include: “(1) repetition, (2) indirectness, (3) elaborateness, and (4) effectiveness”.

Kaplan (1966) also insured the differences between teaching composition to American learners and that to international students stating that rhetoric is a thinking medium where learners from different background, cultures would perceive it differently depending on their importance. In this context, Kaplan highlighted the above sentence-level analysis through connecting writing errors of learners to their cultural background. Kaplan based this conclusion on analyzing about six hundred written papers belong to five different languages indicating that such differences could be a reason for possible learners’ writing errors. The descriptions of language groups’ rhetorical styles that Kaplan explained are grouped as follows: a) English is represented in a linear manner, b) Semitic, Romance, and Russian are represented in a zigzag manner, and c) Oriental is represented in a circular way.

Such findings emphasize the need of EFL learners to practice writing to identity and voice as Le (2009) argues saying that writing “...involves processes of negotiation, adaptation, appropriation and resistance that can occur during the acts of conceptualisation, drafting and writing” and insists that students’ prior experiences as writers and individuals should find validation in composition courses. That is because neglecting to nurture a sense of voice, “... place[s] students at a rhetorical and interpersonal disadvantage, preventing them from communicating appropriate integrity and commitments, and undermining their relationships to readers” (Hyland, 2002).

Ezza (2010) investigated the writing challenges of Arab EFL learners at tertiary level

through highlighting the importance of using more modern techniques in language teaching indicating that the current ones could be identified as outdated. Ezza (2010) justified the possible failure of Arab language learners in composing texts as a result of: "...linguistic incompetence, immature mastery of rhetorical structure of the English text, Arabic discourse transfer., the large number of learners in writing classes, and un-dynamic language materials.". Alghizzi (2021) also analyzed views of 1022 college students about the research methods courses in the department of English at Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University with different levels. He found out that some academic writing challenges such as ability to summarize texts or properly paraphrasing sentences were among the reasons of learners' poor writing. Moreover, Chatta & Haque (2020) adopted mixed method instruments to explore the impact of Flipped Classroom Instruction on developing paragraph writing of Saudi EFL learners. The analysis of the pre and post-tests of the control and experimental groups, a questionnaire and group discussion revealed that the experimental group received better improved writing skills than the control group, and participants had a positive attitude toward Flipped Classroom Instruction.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed methodology of qualitative and quantitative approaches. The data gathered from five university professors specialized in English language, applied linguistics or in a related field, and that collected through the discourse analysis of learners' writing samples were qualitatively analyzed, while the data gathered through a questionnaire distributed to fifty EFL learners were quantitatively analyzed. Therefore, three instruments were used to collect the data of this study as follows:

An interview consisted of six primary questions to collect data about the university staff perceptions toward the importance of writer's voice in improving the writing abilities of EFL learners.

A Survey consisted of five well-constructed questions about college students' perceptions toward the writer's voice and how they basically comprehend the term voice in writing.

Discourse thematic analysis of a free writing essay retrieved from a Saudi male 24 years-old EFL learner.

The sample of this research consisted of (55) participants selected conveniently from one of the Saudi universities due to limited availability measures. Five participants were university professors responded to the interview format, and (50) Saudi male EFL college students at their sixth semester in the English department responded to the survey.

RESULTS

4.1. Interviewees' Responses

Table 1 below shows the responses of interviewees to the first question "Are you familiar with the term writer's voice?". It indicates that all responses to this question were positive revealing a high level of respondents' familiarity the term "writer's voice".

In responding to the second interview question: "Do you think EFL learners can write freely using their voices, how?", the respondents were almost repeating their responses of the first question. However, respondent number 2 was not fully confident that EFL learners are able to write freely or indicate their voices while writing. An interesting point was raised

from respondent number 4 who states that “... the writer’s focus is on correctness... for this ... they are far below writing using their voices ...”. Participant number 5 also pointed to a very arguable point, wondering: “do they... their voices in ... native language?” This response unveils the assumption that EFL learners may simply unable to be good writers in their mother tongue. Table 2 below shows the responses of interviewees to question (2):

Table 1

Interviewees’ responses to question (1).

Interview question 1	Participant No.	Overall responses	Collected themes	Selective Quotations
Are you familiar with the term writer’s voice?	1	Positive	Existence	“voice indicates writer’s existence in text”
	2	To some extent	Style	“The style someone follows in writing”
	3	Positive	Writer’s echo	“When we feel listening to the writer’s saying the written discourse”
	4	Positive	Tone	“The ability of internally reading the written text using the writer’s tone”
	5	Positive	Identity	“...voice is writer’s identity”

Table 2:

Interviewees’ responses to question (2).

Interview question 2	Participant No.	Overall responses	Collected themes	Selective Quotations
Do you think EFL learners can write freely using their voices, how?	1	Positive	Confidence	“...learners need to be confident...”
	2	To some extent.	Learners	“...learners ...unaware...”
	3	Positive	Writer’s echo	“When we feel listening to the writer’s saying the written discourse”
	4	Negative	Correctness	“Second and foreign language learners focus on correctness, grammar and syntax and other related matters and for this reason they far below writing using their voices in a second or foreign language”
	5	To some extent. Conditional response.	Interlanguage	“...possibility that second language learners using their voices in their native language”

Table 3 below shows the responses of the interviewees to the third question “Do you think that EFL learners need to improve their writing?”. It indicates that all responses to this question were positive revealing that EFL learners needed to improve their writing skills. However, the kind of improvement they pointed out to whether it was correctness or fluency remained unrevealed in their responses to this question. That was why question number five addressed this point as can be seen below.

Table 3

Interviewees' responses to question (3).

Interview question 3	Participant No.	Overall responses	Collected themes	Selective Quotations
Do you think that EFL learners need to improve their writing?	1	Positive	NA*	NA*
	2	Positive	NA*	NA*
	3	Positive	NA*	NA*
	4	Positive	NA*	NA*
	5	Positive	NA*	NA*

In their responses to question 4, "What are the main obstacles of applying free-writing in classrooms?" respondents primarily reported four obstacles as shown in table 4 below. These obstacles were: 1) fixed instructions and time 2) low motivation 3) limited impact on improving writing 4) learners' limited knowledge.

Table 4

Interviewees' responses to question (4)

Interview question 4	Participant No.	Overall responses	Collected themes	Selective Quotations
What are the main obstacles of applying free-writing in classrooms?	1	Two points were merged	Fixed instructions/ limited time	Fixed and inflexible teaching instructions with limited time...
	2	One point	Demotivated language instructors	...instructors have busy teaching & advising schedule...
	3	Two points were merged	One-way directed instructions	Language instructors are required to finish certain number of topics in a certain time...no spot for extra curricula activities...
	4	One point	Limited impact	...has limited impact on improving EFL writing...
	5	One point	Learners' limited knowledge	... learners have limited language knowledge, vocabulary, expressions ...

There was a thorny discussion resulted from interviewees' responses to question number five, "Do you think we need to focus on fluency more than accuracy" as can be seen in table 5 below. Two of the participants showed emphasized the importance of accuracy, while the other three confirmed that writer's fluency was a must.

Table 5

Interviewees' responses to question (5)

Interview question 5	Participant No.	Overall responses	Collected themes	Selective Quotations
Do you think we need to focus on fluency more than accuracy?	1	Positive	Prefer focusing on fluency	...fluency is turned to end up with confident accuracy ...
	2	Negative	Prefer focusing on accuracy	...focusing on fluency wouldn't improve writing unless learners have sufficient language knowledge...They haven't...
	3	Negative	Prefer focusing on accuracy	...accuracy in writing is uncontrollable ... cannot create a valid assessment rubric...
	4	Positive	Prefer focusing on fluency	...has a massive impact on improving EFL writing...improved my own writing thorough focusing on fluency...
	5	Positive	Prefer focusing on fluency	... the ability to properly convey meaning is a crucial writing skill regardless ...and writing mistakes ...

In their responses to question 6, "What do you think the problems and challenges that underlie poor writing performance of Saudi EFL learners", the respondents reported a number of themes including: a) Untrained practitioners, b) Poor Revision, c) Poor instruction, d) Discard actual authentic learning, e) Invalid assessment, f) Poor motivation, g) Focusing on memorizing. Table 6 below shows these themes as reported by interviewees:

Table 6

Interviewees' responses to question (6)

Interview question 6	Participant No.	Overall responses	Collected themes	Selective Quotations
What do you think the problems and challenges that underlie poor writing performance of Saudi EFL learners?	1	One point	Untrained practitioners	...language instructors need urgent update of their traditional teaching methods...
	2	One point	Revision is needed	...need to revise the related decisions of ministry of education ...
	3	Two points	Poorly applying instructions. Discard actual authentic learning	Encounter careless instructors... ...wow...taking photos, increased number of needless meetings ...
	4	One point	Invalid assessment	...excellent learners have been identified through their ability to memorize only...
	5	Two points	Poor motivation & focusing on memory level	...lack motivation...memory level

4.2. Survey Results

In responding to the first survey question, “Are you familiar with the term writer’s voice?”, (23) of the participants representing (46%) of the sample reported positive knowledge of the term ‘writer’s voice’, while only (24%) of the participants reported negative recognition of the term, and around, and (30%) of the participants were uncertain about the term. Figure 1 below shows participants’ responses to the first survey question:

SQ1: Are you familiar with the term writer’s voice?

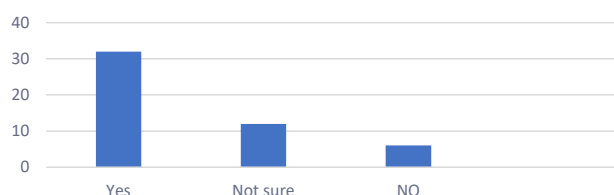


Fig. 1. Responses to survey question (1)

Responses to the second survey question, “Do you think you can write freely using your voice, how?”, were divided into two sub-questions; one requires binary response with yes, no, and the other asked about the ‘how’. This arrangement was taken to preserve the clarity of the collected responses which indicated 32 participants representing (64%) of the sample responded positively that they can use their own voice in writing through free writing, unlimited or extended time given for writing, focusing on fluency not on the accuracy. Figure 2 below shows participants’ responses to the second survey question:

SQ2: Do you think you can write freely using your voice?

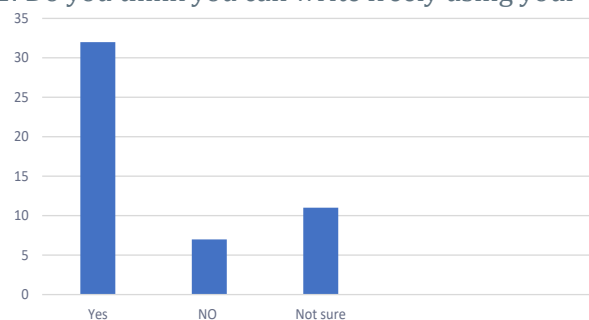


Fig. 2. Responses to survey question (2)

The collected responses to the third survey question, “Do you think that you need to improve your English writing?” indicated that 46 representing the vast majority of the sample reported that they needed to improve their writing. It is noticed that despite the high grades EFL learners received in writing classes, they expressed their need to improve their writing proficiency level. More frequently, the typical writing classes require learners to write a very limited number of sentences with proper punctuation and other grammar and syntactic properties. Figure 2 below shows participants’ responses to the third survey question: However, test-takers of EFL learners, found it was difficult to pass the writing component of language standardized tests such as TOEFL or IELTS. Basically, the writing sections in those international language testing systems require test-takers to activate their higher order thinking skills such as summarizing, synthesizing, analyzing, criticizing and

so on with no focus on writing basic writing skills such as formulating simple sentences or composing limited word-count paragraphs.

SQ3: Do you think that you need to improve your English writing?

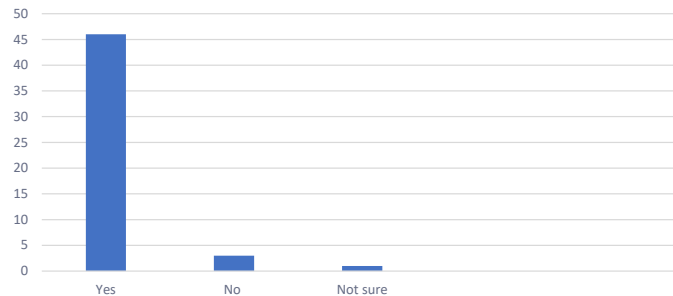


Fig. 3. Responses to survey question (3)

Around three quarters of the participants responded to the survey question number four, “Do you think it is better to focus on fluency more than accuracy?” with positive emphasis on the importance of fluency rather than accuracy in their writing practices. Figure 4 below shows participants’ responses to the fourth survey question:

SQ4: Do you think it is better to focus on fluency more than accuracy?

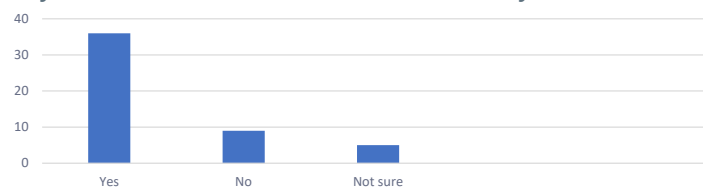


Fig. 4. Responses to survey question (4)

Finally, the participants’ responses to the survey question number five; What do you think the problems and challenges of poor writing? Varied in terms of the solutions and recommendation to improve their writing issues. Their recommendations can be summarized in their need for: 1) longer time for writing tasks, 2) decreased number of writing tests, 3) further exposure to authentic writing materials such as those given in the language proficiency standardized tests IELTS TOEFL etc. 4) more use of advanced academic vocabulary, and 5) further ownership and selection opportunities of writing topics. Figure 5 below shows participants’ responses to the fifth survey question:

SQ5: What do you think the problems and challenges of poor writing?

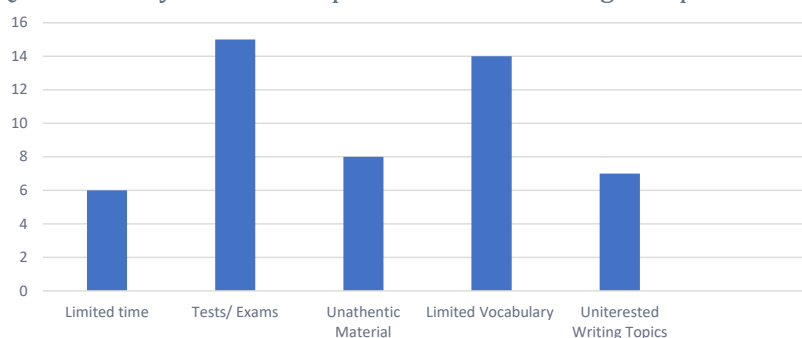


Fig. 5. Responses to survey question (5)

4.3. *Why We Lose Voice in Writing*

An essay of free writing, written by an EFL learner in Fall 2016, entitled “Why we lose voice in writing”. I intuitionally replaced few words by dots for the purpose of anonymity and writer’s confidentiality as it is requested:

This section includes information about the background of Saudi learners and their educational obstacles in different levels, childhood, elementary, intermediate, high school, and finally in college level. No wonder that some Arab children were taught not to negotiate within the family, they should receive whatever their parents or relative offer to them “especially informational level” and these kids should present some respect. To present some respect refers to be a good kid; but what does respect means here? It means looking down to the earth when parents or older brothers are presented. So, I can say that this is the first step to lose their voice in writing, it’s a matter of self-confidence. They gradually lose their personality, and its clearly presented when someone asks the kid what do you want? What do you like? What? What? What? The kid should memorize what the parents told him to respond in such occasions. The hesitation of the kids’ personality would eventually cause them harms more than a real disease would do. Kids and even adults were taught to be wiser and respectful; it is okay, but by doing what? They believe is by remain silent and keep their mouth shut they will be wiser, the fish that keeps its mouth closed, no one can get it! Someone may say it is partially true to some extent. But doing so all the time caused the students to lose their voice and then forget who they really are.

I remember some stories form my childhood with painful memories; my father loud voice and his circle that he made using both his thumb finger and the middle finger pointing out to me: listen ...! I will put your neck her in case you annoy any of our neighbors again. I lived in a small town located at the ... called ..., This city consists of different people from different background “different tribes, extended families” and for this reason there were most of the time children cause trouble to their families. Most of the families are poor, and unable even to buy a bicycle to one of their kids; despite this fact, some families may buy one bicycle for all of their four or more kids. Moreover, this bicycle may be used from poor neighbors’ kids as well. Most of the kids should cause no trouble or otherwise neighbors will go immediately to the kid’s family and complain to them about their kid. And this is not okay, especially with my family. My father did not want to any neighbor to be annoyed from me or from my brothers and little sisters. I don’t know how I lived this childhood with a very broken heart; no bicycle, forced to be silent, forced to remain good kid. What good kid means? It means to be without any thoughts, it means to be observer of the life from within without any sort of interaction. To sum it up, the concept of being a good kid means to be “nothing” say “nothing” ask for “nothing”, your voice never ever be heard. It is really a disaster for the kid to be nothing. Whatever thing I said, my father responded “keep your mouth shut, be respectful”. So, one day, I responded to my father, listen dad please, I do not want to be respectful anymore and only want to play and scream just like my friends ... and ... “sons of our neighbor”. What they are doing? ... and ... are screaming all the day and both play with their new bicycle, but when their father come home they start acting good just like a little cats looking for passionate person to feed them. Sometime, when their father arrived, they offer me to play using their new bicycle “just to show they are acting good”,

sure I rejected their slippery offer. I was dreaming all night to achieve my personal dream of buying a new bicycle. After couple months my dream was changed; my new dream has been changes to be buying a “used” bicycle. However, it is never come to be true until I buy it myself twenty years later when I’ve got a job. So, very simple things would matter with kids.

Listen to this! My father usually telling me with his thumb middle fingers circled, not to make any trouble, but I already could not tolerate this burden any more. ... and ... father was ... teacher and my father had no work except very few goats to feed us, and he might slaughter some of them when guests come to our house. One day, ... and ... were playing “as far as I remember in ...” in the neighborhood and my little brother ... (have the same name of our neighbor’s son; they were born at the same year and his father and my father decided to give them same names) was crying and I came in hurry and asked him what is the problem? He told me that these fat kids told him “go burn yourself poor, you do not have bicycle”. Then I decided “the game is over” and I went to them kicked them and by force took their bicycle and gave it to my little brother to play. Yes, it is kind of suicide if my father heard about this but at that moment I really paid no attention to the whole damn world. I was really burning from the bottom of my heart. Sometimes I prayed hoping to change my family or if not, stop breathing and die. These circumstances were too much to some little kids like me and my brother What was happening next, when my father knew about what I did, was kind of tornado, hurricane, flood whatever disaster someone can imagine. I ran out the home for couple hours but I was very hungry and thirsty, I should go back home to encounter the HELL waiting for me. Then I thought there is no alternative option, absolutely not. When I came home, my father was waiting for me, my mother was angry “as usual” as well, every member of the family was looking down to me. My father hit me on the face, I thought my left cheek will be nom for next two hundred years, and my brain will vibrate within my skull every day I hear the word “bicycle”. What I did, is kind of violation of the rules of respecting neighbors. Honestly, my father was very simple man, he has a very sincere kind heart. But, he is illiterate, he is not able to read or write, so his income knowledge depends on society only; and this is main norm of society at that time. He lacks that kids have very sensitive feelings and they need to build their personality from early ages of their life. I remember one time when a poor man came to our humble rented house asking for money (begging), I went to him and told him, we have nothing to give you but if you would like me to work with you uncle “uncle is a name used to call elder people whose names anonymous”. But what is happening next, my brother ..., went and call my father, and my father gave him all of our food that night; bread and some oil with some money. I came to my father and told him, please dad give me only one riyal to buy two pieces of chocolate to me and my brother ..., but he said no. When I grow up, I understand that he was able to give me some of what he prevented me in the past but he had a perspective of preparing me to face the life in a very solid character. WHAT? A solid character to tolerate life burdens and being able to encounter its difficulties! My father never thought that by using this hard growing up strategy and through shutting me down and hitting me on the face for the sake of our neighbors’ kids would broke myself and cause me to lose anything positive I know one day about who is really I am. This builds inevitable hesitation to grow along with me. What we can get from the previous sentences is forcing the kid to be silent and convince him to the

degree of making the kid believe what the goodness and badness can cause terrible results in future writing, and this would cause the absence of identity, style, ego, persona, and more essentially the voice. ... learners of English as a second language in their English writing use their own terrible background thoughts which retrieved from society rather than their own personal perspectives.

Too much families look to school to get rid of their kids for most of the day time, the families want to relax from the noise of the kids, not because they want to teach them knowledge they need to be more positive in the life. Until relatively recently, most of the families do not look after their kids in schools, they do not ask about their levels of advancements. Alternatively, families merely look to their kids' grads at the end of the semester, whether they pass or fail. Moreover, about five years ago, ... educational system adopted a system, I believe from the US and European countries, that is no kids left behind. However, teacher lack the appropriate skills to work with this new system and yet they make all of the kids to pass the level they at, to the next level with careless and invalid assessment. Therefore, families when they receive the pass grades think their kids are okay at school and the educational level of their kids have increased and have advanced; whereas it is a big lie reflects nothing but the lower level of both teachers, school instructions, educational system, and finally family awareness. By looking at the graduate students from this educational system, a blind can obviously notice the collapse of the students' knowledge and the sever deficiency of the overall performance. Even the motivation of higher level students is depleted and they out of the blue tend to imitate the level of their colleagues, since both they will pass with no considerable achievement. By the time, some of the good students compare their levels to their classmates who pass with them with minimum learning effort and decide to do as their classmates did.

...I remember the sunglasses on that bushy beard face in the reading classroom; our teacher who was not sleep well last night. In 1995, I believe, I was in the fourth grade and the teacher came to our reading class sort of carrying all of the sadness of the world. He obviously, no one needs to tell how angry he was, and we as younger students be more silent to avoid his sharp eye flaming arrows. He usually like this, he scared us to prevent us of making any noise to not cause him to receive bad reputation with the school principle. Then, he asked one of us to read out the reading passage and others should be following with this kid, each one took a turn to read for short time. And we paid all of our effort to avoid his anger and he to make fun of our reading. How can someone imagine that we establish a voice in writing while all of these dilemmas forced us to be more and more silent. It is kind of a thorny issue to discuss, this topic brought some deed excerpts from my dark broken past to present. All of this to authentically discuss the reasons of voiceless ... EFL learners. If I went back to the time I wrote the introduction I would prefer to investigate or write about anything except these childhood moments. My feelings turned to be slightly uncomfortable, especially when I remember that my father lies on his bed for three years because of the brain strokes his weak body received which caused his left side to be fully paralyzed.

Table 8

Summary of collected themes of the essay Why We Lose Voice in Writing

Themes No.	Primary Themes	Quotations	Line No.
1	Confidence	...it's a matter of self-confidence.	9- 10
2	Personality	They gradually lose their personality, ...	10
3	Hesitation	The hesitation ...	12
4	Silence	...remain silent ...	15
5	Losing Voice	...lose their voice...	9- 17
6	Uncertainty	...forget who they really are.	17
7	Thoughts	...without any thoughts, ...	31
8	Interaction	...without any sort of interaction.	32
9	Ignored	...your voice never ever be heard.	33- 34
10	Violation	...kind of violation of the rules...	66
11	Identity, Style, Ego, Persona, Voice	...absence of identity, style, ego, persona, and more essentially the voice.	85
12	Motivation	...motivation of higher level students...	103

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This section discusses the findings revealed by the analysis of the data collected through the three instruments mentioned above namely, interviews, surveys, and discourse analysis of a selected EFL learner's essay. The analysis of the interviewees' responses indicated that the EFL instructors shared relatively an acceptable level of knowledge regarding the terminology of the writing process, in general, and the importance of the writer's voice for learners, in particular. Those instructors reported that the writing voice can improve learners writing skills significantly especially once they were trained on how to effectively invest in their own self-confidence and self-esteem, and once they obtained sufficient exposure to language knowledge and practice (Brown, 2000). Thus, it is difficult to expose EFL learners to academic-constructed writing process, as they gradually lose their motivation toward learning. So, writing as part of expressing someone's interest, ideas, thoughts, and self is more frequently absent in language classrooms.

Despite the fact that we revealed a variety of responses regarding the term writer's voice, we still unable to efficiently identify or describe this term openly. Conceptualizing writer's voice as a process of physical displacement from being uttered as waves into written as text or moving it from being heard into being read could be likely better understood. Discussing this simply does not indicate that this is a simple issue, rather we attempt to highlight the role of improving EFL writers to find their own voice which could end up with improving their writing fluency. Almost all of the collected interview responses ensured that EFL learners needed to improve their writing, which raise a question regarding the possible underlying reasons for their poor writing skill, even though they have been exposed to sufficient language materials along over six years (Alshammari, 2022; Alshammari, 2021; Moskovsky, 2018; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). Again, are we doubtful regarding the writing assessment practices or the authenticity of language materials and teaching methods? It is like a series of chain, if we lose one piece, the other pieces would be useless.

As discussed earlier, the Saudi EFL learners are described as low achievers of language various competencies as reported by official reports retrieved from ETS company despite the numerous educational attempts to solve this issue. The failure of improving EFL learners' writing abilities could be mainly attributed to employing frequent irrelevant teaching practices and ignoring the potential of more effective ones such as the writer's voice as a learning strategy. Curricular guidelines could also contribute to learners' success or failure in this regard. For instance, Fallatah (2016) wonders if the new version of the EFL language course specifications can handle learners' higher writing skills as prescribed in the international standardized testing systems? It is also normal to ask ourselves as EFL specialist for how long should we continue exposing our students to low level and imitative writing tasks? (Chatta & Haque, 2020).

It is suggested that exposing EFL learners to more free-writing tasks would have positive impact on improving their overall writing proficiency (Haynes, 2007). More precisely, the author strongly believes that unless the EFL learners practice writing freely i.e., providing them with the ownership of writing topics, writing style, and writing time for the aim of expressing self, identity and culture, their current writing proficiency level would hardly be improved. The focus on testing and correctness would definitely hinder their fluency and development.

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