

The Writing needs of Business Students: A Teacher's Perception in an EFL context

Syeda Sana Atique *

Imran Khan[†]

Abstract: *The proficiency in writing skills is the most basic and important skill to achieve success in academics. Therefore, not only to ace the exams but also to perform better the students need to develop and improve their writing skills, especially in an EFL environment. Here the perception of teachers regarding the writing needs of business students' matter a lot, as they design their course and teaching materials according to the specific writing needs of the students. Hence, to improve the writing skills of students, it is imperative to determine their writing needs and then employ various strategies, which cater to their specific writing needs. This study aims to explore the writing needs of business students from the perspective of English teachers along with the writing strategies practiced for improvement of writing skills. For this reason, in-depth interviews of three English language teachers of a private business school were conducted. The finding to emerge from this study is that business students face major problems in grammar, Subject-Verb agreement, vocabulary, sentence structure and organization of ideas. Moreover, it was concluded that the awareness of genre and context and use of different registers in writing is essential. Additionally, it was also seen that strategies for writing skills could enhance the skills and abilities of students enormously, especially by incorporating some reading strategies. Implications are drawn for the cooperation between business and English language faculty and more emphasis on the genre based, combination of product process approach of teaching and incorporation of reading tasks.*

Keywords: Writing needs, tertiary business students, EFL, teachers' perception, teaching strategies

Introduction

The importance of English language is undeniable in this era, as English has become the accepted international language of commerce and technology all around the world (Huthchinson & Water, 1987). In order to survive and thrive in this competitive world, one needs to be proficient in English regardless of the occupational field or academic background.

English plays an important role in the education and development of students especially in an environment where English is taught as a foreign language. The proficiency in language does not only entail spoken discourse but emphasis is laid on the written discourse especially at tertiary level.

The students at professional level are expected to be equally proficient in the written discourse. The development and improvement of writing skills are an integral part of any English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course regardless of profession. It is imperative for a student to develop writing skills as most of their assessments, whether it is in the form of exam, term paper, reports or written assignments are in the written discourse. Moreover, the proficiency or expertise in writing skills increases the chances of better employment opportunities for students along with professional development. Good writing skills also reflect on the communication skills of the students (Al-Khasawneh, 2010) as Muslim, 2014 asserts, "students who are skilled in writing can get better

*Lecturer, Faculty of Education and Learning Sciences, Iqra University, Karachi. E-mail: sana.atique@gmail.com

[†]Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education and Learning Sciences, Iqra University, Karachi

grades than those who are unskilled". Hence, in order to survive and succeed in the professional world, it is imperative in fact inevitable for the students to develop and improve writing skills.

Like any second language learners, Pakistani students also face lot of problems in the learning of English language. One of the major reasons is that both the 'needs and interests of the teachers' as well as of students are ignored while teaching English at tertiary level in Pakistan. Apart from students' "lack of exposure to technical English language", the students mostly give importance on "writing correct English" rather than "writing according to the specific task or skill", are the other two causes for difficulties in writing skills (Fatima, 2012).

Most of the students are not proficient in the language as it is a foreign language for them. Various studies investigating the writing needs, problems and skills of Arab learners have also been conducted (Al-Khasawneh, 2010; Bacha & Bahous, 2008; Hisham, 2008; Rababah, 2002). Hence, it can be concluded that speakers of other languages face various problems in acquiring proficiency in English written skills. One of the reason is that instruction in English is usually given by non-native English language teachers though the medium of instruction is English (Rababah, 2002).

The aim of this study is to obtain the perception of the English language teachers regarding the writing problems and needs of the students at a private business school of Karachi. As English is taught as a foreign language, many students face problems in academic writing. Therefore, the present study attempted to get insight into the writing problems of the business students and the strategies adopted by the teacher to cater to those writing needs.

Review of Related Literature

The term English for Specific Purposes, now commonly known as ESP, took roots in the realm of English teaching and learning as the realization dawned that general English courses did not meet the requirements and needs of the learners and employer needs in various fields. The phenomenon of ESP emerged in late 1960's with the convergence of various trends to cater to the needs of the students of various professions. It talked about teaching English language to students with specific purposes. ESP further branches out into two categories mainly known as English for Academic Purpose (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) (Basturkmen, 2010; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Huthchinson & Water, 1987).

Students usually bring their assumptions and beliefs about what a writing course should offer them and in what way. One of the main objectives of ESP teaching is to provide students with ample of opportunities to practice and learn how to write an academic piece of text which is valued and accepted in their specific disciplines. When taking an academic writing course, students' main purpose is to learn to write effectively within their particular discipline and to succeed in their academic studies. Hence, students' needs, perceptions and present writing proficiency levels should be sought first in order to offer them the required assistance (Ismail, 2011).

Henceforth, it was realized as mentioned by Shing and Sim (2011) that "the growth of EAP is derived from the awareness of ESP practitioners that all the tertiary level students possess different learning needs and this cannot be fulfilled by teaching them the same type of English language".

Mastering writing is the most difficult for first and foreign language learners. It is a complicated process since it involves a series of forward and backward movements between the writer's ideas and the written text (Harris & Cunningham, 1994), and requires a high level of language control (Hammad, 2014). Understanding students' writing problems is crucial for improving the quality of FL/L2 (Foreign Language, Second Language) writing. Latif (2007) views that for FL/L2 writing to be developed, the factors (i.e. linguistic competence and writing strategies) affecting its process and product should be examined.

Understanding students' writing problems is crucial for improving the quality of FL/L2 (Foreign Language, Second Language) writing (Latif, 2007). According to previous studies, the most common

prevalent problems in writing skills faced by the learners who learn English as a foreign language are vocabulary, grammar, recognition of register, genre awareness, sentence structure (Al-Khasawneh, 2010; Bacha & Bahous, 2008; Fatima, 2012; Hisham, 2008). The business students of a Malaysian university face problems in vocabulary, register, grammar and referencing (Hisham, 2008). Another important reason due to which Arab learners specifically and speakers of other languages generally encounter problems in writing English is that they do not have numerous opportunities to use English in their society. Whereas a learner can only thrive when surrounded by a language learning environment (Al-Khasawneh, 2010).

In order to determine and understand the nature of the needs of students, it is essential to conduct needs analysis. As Dar (2010) mentions, “It should be noted that whenever a syllabus is designed for any ESP course, a “Need Analysis” is desirable. This aids the ESP course designer in getting a clear view of the language needs of the learner which in turn helps in defining the goals and objectives of the course.”

In order to better understand the students’ problems, it is also important to understand the perception of teachers, as mentioned by (Shing & Sim, 2011) that, “the content of EAP courses largely relies on the students’ English language needs in a particular learning context. Hence, in order to know what kind of content area of EAP courses that would closely match with the students’ needs, it is necessary to review the different ideas of EAP experts or practitioners.” The teachers play an integral part in helping the students to understand the complex nature of academic literacies (Johns, 2005).

The students’ perceptions of writing, learning styles, writing ability and an academic writing course offered at Emeriti University was investigated by Ismail (2011). The results highlighted the students’ expectations and views, which they brought with them to the writing class. One of the most important points emerged from the data collected for this study was the students’ misconception about their ability’. Another key issue that needs to be looked at is students’ meta-cognitive awareness of writing strategies and the actual strategies that they implement while writing. To sum up, the present study made a partial contribution to understand students’ views and expectations about ESL writing, so that other studies need to be conducted to carefully investigate issues highlighted by the study such as the ones mentioned above.

It is important to investigate learner attitudes to online reading of professional materials and writing various assignments, i.e. “read-to-write-tasks” and to assess their proficiency of reading/writing skills in the ESP classes in order to increase the proficiency level of students in an ESP class (Anusienė, Lilija and Kavaliauskienė, Galina, 2010). The teachers play an integral part in helping the students to understand the complex nature of academic literacies (Johns, 2005).

Lea and Street (1998) investigated the problems and issues faced by university students in writing and the writing requirements from both the students and the instructor’s point of view. The article outlines an ‘academic literacies’ framework, which explores the beliefs and practices of students and tutors, that can take account of the conflicting and contested nature of writing practices, and may therefore be more valuable for understanding student writing in today’s higher education than traditional models and approaches.

The writing anxiety can also have a significant effect on the development of academic writing of university students studying English as majors especially. Fear of teacher’s negative feedback, low self-confidence in writing and poor linguistic knowledge were reported as the main causes of second language writing anxiety (Younas et al., 2014).

Rahman (2011) calls for more principled investigations into not only the process of learning in which learners develop strategies and cultural tools that enable them to develop generic awareness and discipline-specific writing, but also the contexts of learning in ESP genre-oriented writing pedagogy. To sensitize students with genre writing is important in order to make them good writers and to explore various linguistic resources.

Recently, language-learning strategies have been the focus of some research in different parts of the globe. As a result of believing that strategies are central for assisting ESL learners to enhance their writing abilities, a number of studies were conducted to explore writing strategies and their benefits (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Casanave, 2002; Sasaki, 2007; de Larios, Manchón, Murphy, & Marín, 2008; Lv & Chen, 2010) as cited in (Ismail, 2011)

According to Gocer (2010) the strategies, which determine the methods and techniques to be used by the teachers in the class activities, affect the success of the language teaching activities and accordingly the efficiency in education.

In Pakistan, a number of studies have been conducted in the domain of ESP keeping in view that English is taught as a foreign language in this context. The conclusion drawn from these studies is that Pakistani students in domain of ESP face problems related to writing skills which are primarily related to vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar, and genre awareness (Dar, 2010; Fatima, 2012; Imtiaz & Sarwar, 2014)

Statement of the Problem

The proficiency in writing skills is one of the most basic and important skills to achieve success in academics. The importance of writing skills can be seen from the fact that most of the evaluation and assessment whether its formative or summative assessment is done in written discourse. Especially for a business degree, students are required to write essays, business letters, reports, research papers, and other tasks that require writing. Therefore, not only to ace the exams but also to perform better the students need to develop and improve their writing skills, especially in an EFL environment. Here the perception of teachers regarding the writing needs of business students' matter a lot, as they design their course and teaching materials according to the specific writing needs of the students. Also keeping in view that English is taught as a foreign language, the faculty for teaching academic English writing also employs various strategies.

To the researchers' best of knowledge, this is one of the unique studies conducted on writing needs of business students' in Pakistan. Though considerable amount of studies have been conducted on Pakistani learners' writing from error analysis perspectives, the area of writing needs form the perspective of faculty has not been dealt with.

In the area of writing needs, most of the previous studies are conducted either through mixed method design or purely quantitative. Scarcely, a qualitative study which stimulates the teachers perspective about the writing needs in an EFL environment could be found. It is claimed that this study would provide findings that are closer to teachers' existent feelings.

Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to investigate the perception of English teachers about the writing needs of business students in an environment where English is taught as a foreign language. For this purpose, an in-depth interview was conducted with the English Faculty of a private business school. This study also tries to explore the use of strategies and techniques, which cater to the needs of the students, employed by the teachers. Therefore the objectives of this study are:

- To ascertain the writing needs of business students according to the perception of English faculty
- To determine the strategies used by the teachers to improve the writing skills

Hence, the present study is an attempt to improve the students' writing skills and develop teachers' teaching practices.

Research Questions

This study is considered as an investigatory one, which aims to identify the perception of English teachers regarding the writing needs of business students in Pakistani EFL environment.

From displaying and investigating the problem, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

- What are the writing needs of business students from the perspective of English faculty in an EFL context?
- What are some of the strategies used by English teachers to improve or develop the students writing skills?

Limitation and Delimitation of the Study

The present study is not flawless as students perceptions are not catered to and hence it has some limitations. Therefore, its findings can be generalized though with some reservations. There is an appeal for other research to be carried out in this area.

One of the limitations of the study is the time restrictions, only the perceptions of the faculty members were investigated and the perceptions or insights of the students on the writing needs could not be explored in the research. Another limitation is that all the three respondents (faculty members) were selected from only one Management Sciences University; hence, it may not yield results that can be generalized on all the private business university students. Moreover, another limitation is regarding the unit of analysis. There is only one unit of analysis in this research study, that is, the faculty members of a business university teaching English.

Research Methodology

In this study, the interview method has been used to analyze the perception of teachers about the writing needs of business students and the strategies employed to improve the writing of students. The interview was conducted through the method of standardized open-ended questions. The exact wording and sequence of questions are determined in advance. All interviewees were asked the same basic questions in the same order (Cohen et al., 2007). Interview questions, based on the main two research questions, were asked from three teachers who teach English as a foreign language to business students at one of the leading private Business management university of Pakistan. The answers were recorded and subjected to the thematic analysis.

Sampling Technique

The present study is based only on one private business university. All the three respondents and the pilot study respondent teach English courses to the business students. All the major respondents are male. All of them hold master's degree in English linguistics and have more than 10 years of teaching experience at tertiary level.

Non-random sampling was done to select the mentioned three respondents. The non-random sampling is both purposive and convenience as the interviewees have had to meet a certain criteria. The interviewees are English language subject specialists with an experience of more than 10 years of teaching English language at tertiary level. In addition, the availability of all the three interviewees at one private university makes it a convenience sampling.

Table 1: Description of Respondent's

Respondent's Description	Codes
Teacher 1: Male Respondent 1	MR1
Teacher 2: Male Respondent 2	MR2
Teacher 3: Male Respondent 3	MR3

Research Instrument

The present study drew its data from eighteen interview questions, which were based equally on the writing needs of business students from the perception of faculty and the strategies employed by the faculty to improve and to cater to the needs of the students. These questions were flexible with probing and allowed the participants to think and express their own answers freely. The questions were shared with the respondents before the interview to lessen the anxiety and for the preparation.

Instrument's Reliability

To check the instrument's reliability, a pilot study was conducted. Inferring on the response of the pilot study the interviews for the main study were conducted.

Ethical Consideration

Before conducting the research, it is imperative for researchers to keep the research ethical considerations in view. Considering such ethical issues, the researcher informed the study participants that their participation would be voluntary, and they had the right not to complete the research. In fact, all the participants were willing to get involved in the study, and gave the researcher informed consents. They were also informed that their identities would be kept confidential.

Research Procedure

The researcher conducted open ended in depth interviews of three English language teachers with a Master's degree in English Linguistics and a minimum experience of ten years each. All the three respondents have a minimum experience of five years of teaching English to Business university students. The details of the respondents are mentioned in the table below.

Data Analysis

After conducting the open-ended in-depth interviews of the three respondents, the data was analyzed and explored for identifying emerging themes in the study. For analyzing the interviews, the researcher used the qualitative data analysis steps given by Miles (1994). The interviews were transcribed, coded and organized into six emerging themes. In order to establish the data credibility the inter rater coder reliability was carried out by using the Kappa Calculator. For this purpose, the Inter coding form was filled by five different coders as mentioned. Then the reliability was measured by using online Kappa Calculator, which is 0.87 or 87%. Miles (1994) state that the reliability should be above 80% for check coding.

Findings

Thematic Analysis

Theme 1(Language problems of business students)

One of the most prominent emerging theme in all the three interviews is regarding the language problems of business students from the perception of English language teachers. The students usually face lot of difficulties while writing in English as it is a foreign language for them. The respondents identified a number of issues related to the language problems of business students.

Some of the most common problems of students are related to vocabulary, punctuation, sentence structure, spelling and Subject Verb Agreement as highlighted by all the three respondents. One of the teacher respondent said that:

“...From my observations and experience, what I have felt is that as far as their vocabulary is concerned, I would say that they need to improve their vocabulary. And then as far as their grammar and accuracy is concerned. The accuracy is one area, which needs to be improved a lot. Accuracy in terms of Subject verb agreement, articles, sentence structure, run off sentences, punctuation and spellings even...”(MR1)

Moreover, the problems are not only limited to sentence structure as most of the students are lacking in the organization of ideas and clarity. Another respondent pointed out this problem as he said “...Number one construction of sentences. Number two, they do not have lot of thoughts. Lack of ideas you know...”(MR3). Another respondent also underlined this problem, as he said, “...Clarity in their writing is also another issue of the organization of the ideas and clarity...” (MR1)

However, only one respondent pointed out that: “And one thing which I find is surprising that they are most of them were not able to differentiate between formal and informal language. You see that the register of language most of them will not have any awareness of it.” (MR1)

Hence, it can be deduced that majority of the business students have some common problems, which are vocabulary, sentence structure, punctuation, clarity in writing and organization of ideas along with pervasive issue of Subject Verb Agreement.

Theme 2 (Activities/tasks to improve writing skills)

All the three respondents agreed on the fact that reading can play a pivotal role in improving the writing skills of the business students. As one of the respondent has incorporated the reading review strategy to improve the writing skills. He says that:

“The reading review strategy which I use with them. Reading review task I believe helps them to improve their vocabulary, it also helps them to develop structures as well. And it helps them to look at the text organization as well. And their reading are good writers. They are unknowingly and unintentionally you know they observe how the text is organized. When they start writing, I believe that learning from reading can be transformed into writing as well.” (MR1)

Another respondent said that “I give them writing skills with relate to reading skills and I give them reading task. I ask them to read on this particular topic and then write. So they develop their ideas as well.” (MR3)

While another respondent said,“...I make them read in the class to develop the pronunciation and dictions skills and also the level of receptivity to what they read...” (MR2)

It can be understood that the language teachers try to improve the writing skills of their students by designing the activities around reading. This can be seen from the fact that most of the activities to develop writing skills are planned around reading.

Apart from reading, the respondents use various strategies to develop and enhance the vocabulary and grammar of business students. The respondent believed: “As far as grammar is concerned.

You must have seen that every good business communication book has grammar handbook as well in the end.” (MR1)

Moreover, the same respondent said that for vocabulary enhancement he provides students with few vocabulary books and assign them to work on it. In order to keep a track of their improvement, a quiz of vocabulary is taken after every four classes.

Theme 3(Identification of writing needs)

In order to improve the writing skills of the students and to use different strategies, the most important thing is the identification of the writing needs of the students. Without identification, the teachers will not be able to modify the course content and design the appropriate material according to the needs of the students. The three interviewees use different ways of identifying the needs of the students. A common view amongst interviewees to identify the needs of the business students is to see their background. One of the interviewee said: “See one general idea of the background of the students I generally have that most of them that is 90-95% of them will be coming from inter matric background.” (MR1). Another respondent also believed that “Background is very important, Cambridge students definitely perform better, there base is more solid and they improve faster.”(MR2).

The teachers usually check the background of the students by asking them questions related to their prior educational background in the first class of the semester. As one interviewee put it: “I have this introduction activity on the first day in the class and there I ask them to tell me their name and tell me the college from where they are coming.” (MR1)

In addition, the second activity practiced by the respondent to identify the writing problems is “The problem with writing is that they have to tell me one problem which they think is the biggest problem with writing. So in the beginning class you know I get some idea of the students’ problems from this activity as well.” (MR1). Hence, this way the teacher respondent carries out the indirect needs analysis of his business students.

On the other hand, one of the respondents expressed an alternative technique for identifying the writing needs of the students. For instance, one interviewee said, “I follow the error analysis technique. I take what they have written and I discuss it with them and I point out their errors and I give them the logic and the rational of the error.” (MR2) Another respondent backed up this technique as he said, “The third one is actually is their first writing assignment. They write their first paragraph at that time you know looking at their writing I get an idea of actually of what most people... what areas are the grey areas in most people writing.” (MR1)

Hence, from the interview data it can be deduced that teachers use various strategies to determine the writing needs of business students. The educational background of the students, the first writing assignment and the error analysis technique along with initial ice-breaking activities identifies and ascertains the writing needs of business students.

Theme 4(specific writing skills to be developed by students)

There are certain writing skills which students are required to develop in order to become proficient writers. Some of the most important skills to be developed are awareness of audience in context, awareness of contextual writing and familiarity of different registers. Talking about this issue an interviewee said: “...They are able to write for specific audience; whenever they are writing they are aware that who their audience is and they will adapt their message effectively to the needs of the audience...” (MR1). The same respondent was also of the view that students should also develop the skills and capacity to recognize as well as write in different registers. As he put it: ”...The other thing is that they also have to develop the ability to write in different registers, in different styles: formal, very informal, slightly informal...” (MR1)

Another interviewee, when asked about contextual writing, said: "...students should be familiar with contextual writing, they should be familiar with report writing, they should be familiar with proposals, then they should be familiar with particularly technical descriptions..." (MR2)

The development of another writing skill highlighted in one of the interviews is about the familiarity of students with objectives of the respective writing task. As one of the interviewee believed "...students should be familiar with the terminologies related to these kind of writing and they should be familiar with the objectives of what they are writing so that they can come up to the expectations..." (MR2)

Therefore, it can be concluded that it is imperative for business students to develop the skills and abilities related to the awareness of context, awareness of audience, understanding of different registers and acquaintance with the objectives of writing.

Theme 5(strategies for teaching writing skills)

After the identification of students writing needs, the most important thing is the strategies used to teach writing skills to the business students. The three respondents identified a number of strategies varying from the combination of product and process approach to free writing and reading reviews.

One of the respondents said "...I believe in mixture of product and process approach to writing. And these two approaches when combined may prove to be most effective strategy to teach writing. So I take from the product approach of writing from product approach I take the modeling part..." (MR1)

While another respondent employs communicative language teaching methodology to teach writing skills, as he says "...Basically communicative approach is what I use in my teaching and I involve the learners in the process of learning and teaching and I give them handouts..." (MR2)

Talking about strategies, the respondents mentioned that they use couple of strategies to increase the writing skills of students. For instance, free writing technique, peer editing, and vocabulary improving technique and showing samples of writing tasks. As one interviewee put it: "...Free writing is another activity, which I think helps them develop their writing habit..." (MR1) and the same respondent was of the view that "...Grammar teaching can be more effective if it's done through providing text and paragraphs even if you are providing practice and punctuation it should be in a paragraph..." (MR1)

The language teachers employs different strategies for improving the vocabulary of students. One of the respondents uses creative writing to improve the vocabulary of students. He said that: "...creative writing for example if I give them a descriptive essay so I give them 10 words that they have to use in that descriptive essay and its mandatory for them to use those 10 words related to that particular topic..." (MR2)

A common view amongst interviewees was that students should be shown models and samples of various types of writing and this is where the product approach come in. One interviewee said "...A model has to be provided to the students first. So from product approach I believe that first we show them models and then we discuss, we focus on the genre specific features..." (MR1).

Another interviewee also uses this strategy as he said "...Model key Main kia krta ho State Bank main mere kuch dost hain, un se letter le leta ho, MCB main jo roz ki trust funding horai hai and I make them as a model. I thought ke ye ek letter hai. You need to change the situation and do it..." (MR3)

Henceforth, from the data set, above-mentioned strategies are highlighted, which the language teachers use for teaching and improving writing skills of the business students.

Theme 6(Strategies for writing essays-planning, writing, revising, editing)

This theme, strategies for writing essay, recurred throughout the dataset. The three respondents mentioned about the four steps of essay writing, which are planning, writing, revising and editing, in the interview a couple of times. All the three interviewee's were of the view that it is important to teach and make students conscious of the four steps of writing process though they use various strategies to accomplish this objective. One of the respondent said:

"...There are four parts of a writing process and the planning is the first one. I teach them five ways of planning. So the five ways of planning includes the listing, brainstorming or mind mapping and asking six questions, creating an outline and free writing as well. Free writing is given as a brainstorming..." (MR1)

Similarly, another respondent was of the view: "...For this I use a technique in which I tell them to do free writing. And they are given a certain period of time..." (MR2)

On the other hand, all the three respondents introduce and make students accustomed to the revising and editing part of the writing process by using different strategies. As one of the interviewee put it: "...I give them for editing a piece of creative writing, they are asked to look for mistakes, and the guideline given is that the more mistakes you can uncover the better and all sort of mistakes..." (MR2).

Correspondingly, one of the respondents believed that: "...dekho is pe peer review main krwata ho. letter is written, essay is written. I ask his friend to go and edit it. Tou ek to strategy ye hai ke peer review hona chahiye us say self-confidence banta hai. So that's one of the strategies for editing..." (MR3). Another interviewee said:

"...through peer editing drafting they will write the first draft, peer edit and give feedback to each other and revise. So in editing part we follow Langan's 6 strategies using construct point of view, using parallelism, using specific words so you see those strategies are focused and then they practice in the class as well..." (MR1)

Therefore, the language teachers lay a key emphasis on following the four steps of writing process, which includes free writing and brainstorming with respect to planning, and peer editing with respect to editing and revising.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate the writing needs of business students from the perspective of English language teachers of a selected private university in Karachi, Pakistan. Through the study not only the writing needs but also the strategies used for teaching writing skills were explored. These qualitative findings revealed that the business students face major problems in vocabulary, sentence structure, organization of ideas, clarity of ideas and most importantly Subject Verb Agreement. This trend was very much expected as English is taught as a foreign language in this context. This result was similar to the study conducted by [Hammad \(2014\)](#) at Al-Aqsa University Palestine which found out that students experience problems related to grammatical errors, lexical errors, cohesion errors, lack of academic style and lack of content knowledge.

Moreover, the results of this study seemed to confirm the findings of a study by [Rahman \(2011\)](#) which emphasized on the awareness of genre along with awareness of context and use of different registers in writing. The fourth theme sets the issue in spotlight where the three respondent EFL teachers were in view that the business students should be aware of the writing in context and the writing should be audience specific.

The second research objective of the study focused on the writing strategies used by the teachers to develop and enhance the writing skills of the students. The importance of the writing strategies cannot be denied as they play an imperative part in enhancing the writing abilities of the ESL

learners as mentioned earlier in the literature review as well. Furthermore, the findings of this study suggest that to improve the writing skills, the focus should be laid on reading as well. This is so because reading and writing are interrelated and many activities revolve around reading in order to improve the writing skills of the students. The findings also suggest that the four step writing process plays a crucial role in the development of writing skills as they become aware of the techniques of free writing, brainstorming and peer editing, which not only helps them in essay writing but also in other writing tasks as well.

Recommendations based on the Findings

The findings of this study revealed the writing needs of the business students and the strategies adopted by the teachers to enhance the writing skills. The business students have some elementary level flaws in their writing, which includes vocabulary, Subject Verb Agreement, Punctuation, sentence structure and organization of ideas. In addition, these problems are more deeply rooted in the students coming from the Intermediate background. So one of the recommendations would be that intermediate level English language curriculum should incorporate some more detailed activities on the grammar and the mechanics of the Language.

Another result, which is drawn from the study, is that the business students generally lack the awareness of genre-based writing. Moreover, they not only lack awareness of audience but also the awareness of writing in different registers and writing in context. The familiarity with contextual writing and genre-based writing is elementals the business students need to be aware of the audience and the context in order to write proficiently. Hence, English language teachers need to focus on these areas while teaching English language courses to business students especially courses based on writing skills.

The support from the Management Sciences faculty can prove to be beneficial. The business faculty should support the English language teachers to select relevant and authentic text in the form of case studies and latest trends in business so they can develop and enhance their writing skills with the business related content. The English teaching faculty can also seek support to understand the business jargon.

Moreover, the findings of this study will help the English language teachers, who are teaching English to business students, to review their strategies for teaching of writing skills. In the light of this study, the teachers are suggested to sue a combination of process and product approach for deeper understanding of writing mechanics.

An important recommendation based on the study would be to arrange extra non-credit writing courses for business students to improve their writing skills. It is quite evident that the language skills and especially the writing skills of the students cannot be developed and improved in just four-month short period. In fact, it is an ongoing and continuous process. Therefore, the business universities can offer extra support writing courses to students for the improvement of writing skills.

The results of this research support the idea that the reading plays a pivotal role in developing and improving the writing skills. All the interviewees were of the view that activities based on reading can prove to be beneficial in increasing the writing skills of the students. It will not only increase their vocabulary but will also make them conscious of sentence structure and organization of ideas.

Conclusion

This research investigated the perceptions of teachers about the writing needs of business students and the required strategies for teaching them in an EFL context. Interviews of three English teaching faculty members of a private business school were conducted. This study was set out to

determine the language problems faced by the business students, and the strategies incorporated by the teachers to not only to cater to the writing needs but also to develop students' proficiency in writing skills.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the study. To begin with, some of the common language problems faced by business students are related to grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, Subject Verb Agreement, and organization of ideas. Moreover, it was found that writing skills could be improved and developed by incorporating reading in the course.

The results of this research support the idea that the writing skills of business students can be improved by incorporating more reading of context related material and focusing on the eradication of language problems mentioned earlier. However, these findings cannot be generalized, as they are limited to the perceptions of English language teachers of one private business university only. The same study needs to be conducted with students in order to determine the similarities between their writing needs and the perception of the teachers.

This research has thrown up many questions in need of further investigation. More research is required to determine the writing needs of the students from the viewpoint of the students as well. Therefore, a comparative study can be conducted to determine and compare the writing needs of students from the perception of both the stakeholders. Moreover, to make the results more generalizable, the English language teachers and students of other business universities can be included in the sample size.

Furthermore, another dimension, which can be explored with respect to writing needs, is the genre based writing tasks. The required skills and the basic writing needs for report writing, letter writing, and case studies can be further explored.

References

- Al-Khasawneh, F. M. S. (2010). Writing for academic purposes: Problems faced by arab postgraduate students of the college of business, uum. *ESP World*, 9(2), 1–23.
- Anusienė, Lilija and Kavaliauskienė, Galina. (2010). Online Reading and Writing in English for Specific Purposes Classes. *Kalbu Studijos*(17), 99–104.
- Bacha, N. N., & Bahous, R. (2008). Contrasting views of business students' writing needs in an eff environment. *English for Specific Purposes*, 27(1), 74–93.
- Basturkmen, H. (2010). *Developing courses in English for specific purposes*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Casanave, C. P. (2002). *Writing games: Multicultural case studies of academic literacy practices in higher education*. Routledge.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research Methods in Education*. Routledge.
- Dar, M. (2010). From general to specific English: A case study of NUML. *Journal of NELTA*, 15(1-2), 28–42.
- de Larios, J. R., Manchón, R., Murphy, L., & Marín, J. (2008). The foreign language writer's strategic behaviour in the allocation of time to writing processes. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 17(1), 30–47.
- Dudley-Evans, T., & St John, M. J. (1998). *Developments in English for specific purposes: A multi-disciplinary approach*. Cambridge university press.
- Fatima, S. (2012). Teaching Report Writing Skills through Communicative Activities. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 2(2), 104–109.
- Gocer, A. (2010). A qualitative research on the teaching strategies and class applications of the high school teachers who teach English in Turkey as a foreign language. *Education*, 131(1), 196.
- Hammad, E. A. (2014). Palestinian University Students' Problems with EFL Essay Writing in an Instructional Setting. *Journal of Second and Multiple Language Acquisition-JSMULA*, 2(1).
- Harris, J., & Cunningham, H. D. (1994). *The simon & schuster guide to writing: instructor's manual with background readings*. Prentice Hall.
- Hisham, D. (2008). *Needs analysis of Arab graduate students in the area of EAP: A case study of the ICT program at UUM*.
- Huthchinson, T., & Water, A. (1987). *English for Specific Purposes: A learning-centered approach*. Cambridge University Press.
- Imtiaz, S., & Sarwar, M. A. M. (2014). Needs analysis and a course design of english for specific purpose for the administrative staff (clearks) of govt. islamia college, lahore. *Research Journal of English Language and Literature*, 2(3), 291-298.
- Ismail, S. A. A. (2011). Exploring students' perceptions of ESL writing. *English Language Teaching*, 4(2), p73.
- Johns, A. (2005). Language and change: Academic literacies in a complex era. In *Language and change: Selected papers from the second regional english conference on language and change held at the lebanese american university* (pp. 9–14).
- Latif, M. A. (2007). The factors accounting for the Egyptian EFL university students' negative writing affect. *Essex Graduate Student Papers in Language & Linguistics*, 9(7), 57–82.
- Lea, M. R., & Street, B. V. (1998). Student writing in higher education: An academic literacies approach. *Studies in higher education*, 23(2), 157–172.
- Lv, F., & Chen, H. (2010). A study of metacognitive-strategies-based writing instruction for vocational college students. *English Language Teaching*, 3(3), 136-144.
- Miles, M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: a source book of new methods*. Newbury, CA: Sage.
- Rababah, G. (2002). Communication problems facing arab learners of english. *Journal of Language and Learning*, 3(1).

- Rahman, M. M. (2011). Genre-based Writing Instruction: Implications in ESP Classroom. *English for Specific Purposes*, 33(11), 1-9.
- Sasaki, M. (2007). Effects of Study-Abroad Experiences on EFL Writers: A Multiple-Data Analysis. *The Modern Language Journal*, 91(4), 602–620.
- Shing, S., & Sim, T. (2011). EAP needs analysis in higher education: Significance and future direction. *English for Specific Purposes World*, 33, 1–11.
- Younas, M., Subhani, A., Arshad, S., Akram, H., Sohail, M., Hamid, M., & Farzeen, M. (2014). Exploring the Causes of Writing Anxiety: A Case of BS English Students. *Language in India*, 14 (8), 197–208.