

# Exploring Emirati Freshman's English Writing Proficiency Level: A Case Study

Khuloud Alhammadi

Dept, Zayed University

PO Box, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Tel: 97-150-975-8857 E-mail: Z9820@zu.ac.ae

Received: Feb. 20, 2025

Accepted: March 9, 2025

Published: May 1, 2025

doi:10.5296/jse.v15i2.22655

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5296/jse.v15i2.22655>

## Abstract

This study qualitatively investigated the English writing proficiency of Emirati female freshmen at a national university in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), focusing on common errors and missing principles in their essay writing. Content analysis of open-book assessments revealed significant deficiencies in following instructions, organizing essays (introduction, body, conclusion), constructing grammatically correct sentences, paraphrasing, using APA citations, and incorporating textual evidence. The findings highlight a gap between high school preparation and university expectations, emphasizing the need for improved writing instruction in secondary education, focusing on critical thinking, and exposure to varied writing tasks and styles, including extensive reading. This research contributes to understanding the challenges faced by Emirati students in transitioning to higher education and offers implications for curriculum design and EFL teaching practices.

**Keywords:** Emirati students, English writing proficiency, higher education, qualitative research, content analysis, EFL, essay writing, academic writing

## 1. Introduction

The acquisition of proficient English writing skills is paramount for success in higher education and professional careers, particularly in increasingly globalized contexts. This is especially relevant in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), where English serves as a vital language of communication and academic instruction (Al Kitbi, 2006; Al Sayegh, 2004). This study focuses on exploring the English writing proficiency levels of Emirati female freshmen at a national university, examining common writing challenges, and identifying gaps between secondary and tertiary education. The transition from high school to university often presents a significant hurdle for students. While striving for reform and alignment with international standards, the UAE's educational system faces the challenge of bridging the gap between secondary and higher education levels of English language proficiency. The significant investment in English language instruction, including the now-defunct Academic Bridge Program, highlights the recognized need to equip Emirati students with the necessary skills for success in higher education. However, concerns persist regarding the effectiveness of secondary education in preparing students for the demands of university-level writing. This issue has been concerning the government for many years especially after a report on UAE higher education was released by the UAE Federal National Council's Committee for Education and Youth and Information and Cultural Affairs in 2004 (Hoath, 2004) that showed the deterioration in the Students' English levels in general (Gobert, 2019). This research addresses these concerns by investigating the writing skills of Emirati freshmen who did not participate in remedial programs, identifying prevalent writing difficulties, and exploring the implications for curriculum development and EFL pedagogy. The findings aim to inform effective strategies for enhancing English writing proficiency among Emirati students, thereby supporting their academic and professional aspirations.

## 2. Overview

The following is an overview of the Grade 12 English Textbook (government sector) the EmSAT test, and the writing requirements (COLS) of composition 1 at a national university. The overview helps connect the dots and form a basic understanding of which the discussion in this paper will be based on.

Eligibility to join any national university constitutes passing the United Arab Emirates Standardized Test, known as EmSAT (Achieve English Test and is arguably considered the most crucial test for universities' entry with a minimum score of 1250. According to the score descriptors of EmSAT Achieve English, ranging between 1200-1600 scores means that the student is "Can understand the main ideas of complex text. Can interact with native speakers without strain? Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint (CEFR Band B2)" (CERR, 2017). The EmSAT consists of 25 questions, of which 24 questions are multiple choices, and one is essay writing. The essay prompt requires the student to respond within 200 to 250 words. Unlike other language assessment exams like (IELTS and Tofel) the exam does not test students' speaking nor listening skills.

Students joining year one at the national universities in the UAE, are expected to demonstrate

specific learning outcomes by graduation. Among those learning outcomes of The National University, language comes first. Hence, it is found that with the help of the professional and academic conventions of the languages appropriately, the students will develop skills to effective communication in modern Arabic and English standards (The National University Learning Outcomes). Therefore, the year one student must pass two composition courses (Composition 1 and 2 known as ENG 140 and ENG 145) to enable the graduated program to continue their higher education.

The learning outcomes of first composition are as follows:

- Demonstrate reading comprehension for main ideas and supporting points in a range of written text types through summary writing.
- Employ the writing process, including pre-writing, drafting and revising/editing, responding to the instructor, and peer-review feedback.
- Demonstrate academic integrity through the appropriate use of quotation, summary, paraphrase, and in-text citation.
- Recognize elements of focus, development, coherence, cohesion, clarity, style, tone, and accuracy and begin to produce writing which demonstrates these features at the sentence, paragraph, and essay levels.
- Critically examine evidence from readings and elaborate upon these ideas through written responses by incorporating appropriate rhetorical modes.

The course covers rhetorical modes, namely: cause and effect, compare and contrast, and summarizing. It has three primary assessments. The first is an open book exam during which they need to read two texts two weeks before the assessment day and following this, they fill in a diagram by summarizing the main points and convert their points to respond to the prompts in the exam. The exam will require them to summarize one more text that will only come on the exam day, and students are requested to follow the APA citation and include textual evidence in the response. So students will write a summary with APA in-text citation, and the second task will be writing a response to a prompt related to the text they read before the exam. They also need to provide textual evidence to support their arguments by including either quoting from the text or paraphrasing some points.

The main challenge lies in the fact that students who graduated from the government school, unlike their counterparts who came from other private schools (American and British curriculum-based schools) usually find themselves diving into ambiguity when responding to university assessments as the open-book assessments, APA style, quoting and paraphrasing, brainstorming and outlining their writing, not to mention the other challenges that are related to content and development, organization, style, and grammar, were not well-introduced back in their high school year.

### **3. Literature Review**

According to Null (2016) “Curriculum is the heart of education.” The distinct yet related components of a curriculum and a syllabus have been thoroughly discussed in the literature. A syllabus derives from the umbrella of curriculum and helps attain its objectives. Dubin and Olshtain (1986, p. 34) described the curriculum and explained that it contains a detailed description of the objectives of educational-cultural philosophy, and following this, “it applies with a theoretical orientation to language and its learning.” They also said, “A curriculum is often reflective of national and political trends as well.”

Tanner and Tanner (1980) on the other hand, defined curriculum as “the planned and guided learning experiences and intended outcomes, formulated through systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experience under the auspices of the school, for the learner’s continuous and willful growth in personal social competence” (p. 13). This definition highlights the importance of ensuring that students who go to school for 12 straight years follow a well-structured plan to graduate with accumulated knowledge and perform as expected at a higher education institute.

#### *3.1 Writing Skills*

First-year students find writing courses difficult because writing as a process is not easily attained. Students find it challenging to write in their first language; hence writing in a foreign one is even more challenging. As many studies indicate, students attending English as Foreign Language (EFL) get influenced by their first language while writing in English (Cedar, 2004; Chen & Huang, 2003; Collins, 2002; Jarvis, 2000). This could be one of the main factors for considering writing in EFL a complicated process. Another factor could be the fact that students at high school are only required to write short paragraphs. Writing is an activity that requires neither practice nor memorizing. However, high school students are used to memorizing some vocabularies and sentences to use them in their short paragraphs and are not usually requested to write in a manner that represents their ability to reflect their thoughts and critical thinking (Wachs, 1993).

Scholars highlight the need to promote high school students’ academic readiness for college (Perna, 2005) particularly in writing (Adelman, 2006). In higher education, the courses are on the student assessment composition and proficiency of writing that helps them fit with the higher studies (Conley, 2007).

According to Conley (2007) English knowledge and skills acquired before college entry facilitate students’ text creation, well-written, organized and supported work products, whether orally or written. Therefore, in schools’ curriculum, similar to many governments worldwide, the UAE government is also focusing on English as a Second Language (ESL) (Gallagher, 2019; Al Kitbi, 2006; Al Sayegh, 2004; Kharma, 1998). Unfortunately, it has been found that English proficiency level, especially among the grade students, is frequently inadequate, and it creates resistance for them when they go for higher education or a job in the market (Al Kitbi, 2006).

In UAE National higher education institutions, students must complete at least one semester in the foundation program due to their low English proficiency level (Swan, 2015). The National University offered an extra program before the foundation year, known as the Academic Bridge Program, to prepare students who could not get the required passing grade in the EmSAT to get prepared under a conditioned enrolment status foundation year rather than the major. However, just like other federal institutions, it was decided to cancel the program, deemed a waste of national resources. Government higher education institutions had been dedicating noticeable financial resources to prepare Emirati high school graduates with the necessary English language skills. A budget of over 300 million dirhams was allocated for these programs (Intensive English, math, and study skills) per year (Hoath, 2004). Therefore, the three federal higher education institutions received heavy criticism for allocating one-third of their budget for the Foundation programs instead of focusing on the needs of the significant content programs, such as Engineering and Health Science and research (Salem & Swan, 2014).

Among the solutions generated by parents concerned with their kids' performance at the university is sending their children to English Medium Schools. A report published by the Dubai Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) reflected that more than 60% of Emiratis send their children to private schools where fees can reach 45,000 AED (Nazzal, 2018). When asked, most parents attributed this choice to two significant reasons: offering a high quality of education and better English language education (Nazzal, 2018). Hence, it has become pronounced that parents and their children are aware of the importance of English proficiency levels, which influences their school preferences even if that would be at the expense of lowering their Arabic proficiency and Islamic education. However, not all parents can afford that. Therefore, when you have many students in your classroom coming from private schools and have excellent English and were well-prepared for academic writing requirements, most of the time, the discussion in classes becomes lopsided. Those with low English refuse to participate, try to hide their low-performance, prefer to either purchase ready essays or plagiarism without knowing the risk of their actions. The majority of children who attend private schools develop high competencies in the English Language. However, not all parents can send their children to private (English Medium Schools).

### *3.2 Factor's Influencing Students' Writing*

Many studies have long explored the notion of students' writing and more specifically explored the factors that impact it. Some research indicated a close relationship between this specific skill and other skills and most importantly reading (Qin & Groombridge, 2023).

Many scholars examined how language proficiency impact EFL students' writing. The higher the language proficiency, the better the lexico-grammatical choices made in writing (Yasuda, 2015). Various studies exploring the same notion claimed the existence of a correlational relationship between language proficiency and effective source use in writing (Cumming et al., 2016). Moreover, the reading strategy students utilize to analyze reading texts and provide responses to the prompts affects the quality of writing. Lower proficiency is related to

bottom-up reading strategies, unlike higher-proficiency peers who utilize top-down approaches and schema (Marzec-Stawiarska, 2016). Lower proficiency learners also show more copying and less effective paraphrasing (Li, 2021; Stander, 2020).

Hence, the literature on English writing proficiency highlights the critical role of instructional practices and educational frameworks in shaping student outcomes. Numerous studies have documented that students often struggle with writing tasks due to insufficient preparation in high school, especially in EFL contexts (Chen & Huang, 2003; Collins, 2002). Furthermore, researchers have emphasized that traditional pedagogical approaches may not effectively address the diverse needs of learners, particularly in regions like the UAE, where educational reforms are underway (Al Kitbi, 2006; Perna, 2005). The existing body of research points to a pressing need for curricula that integrate explicit writing instruction, emphasizing not only grammatical accuracy but also critical thinking and organization skills. By focusing on foundational writing competencies, educators can better prepare students for the complexity of academic writing they will encounter in higher education. This literature serves as a basis for understanding the challenges faced by Emirati students and reinforces the necessity for targeted interventions that align with both local educational goals and international standards.

#### **4. Research Questions**

The research will explore the writing level of students who graduated from high school in terms of providing proper style, organization, vocabulary, paraphrasing, and citation.

More specifically, the paper aims to answer the following question:

- 1) To what extent do the writing skills (sentence construction, organization, paraphrasing, and APA citation) of Emirati female freshmen at the national university reflect the writing instruction and assessment practices they experienced in secondary school?

#### **5. Research Method**

##### *5.1 Research Design*

This study employed a qualitative research design utilizing content analysis to explore the writing challenges faced by students. This approach allows for an in-depth examination of their written work and the identification of prevailing deficiencies, providing a nuanced understanding of the participants' writing processes and the factors influencing their performance. By employing qualitative content analysis, this study aims to illuminate the common errors and writing challenges experienced by Emirati female freshmen. The content analysis involved systematically coding student responses to identify prevalent deficiencies across various writing skills, including following instructions, organization, grammatical accuracy, paraphrasing, citation practices, and vocabulary use. This methodology captures the students' writing proficiency levels and highlights potential areas for targeted interventions to enhance their skills and academic performance (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).



### *5.2 Participants and Data Collection*

The study targeted all-female Emirati national students enrolled in their first year at the university. A total of 40 participants were selected, with 28 (70%) originating from government high schools. This focus on this demographic is relevant for understanding the unique challenges these learners face in their transition to university-level writing. Students came from two sections taught by the same instructor from ENG140, due to the university's policy and the specific classroom composition, which consisted exclusively of female students; only female participants were involved in the study. The answers were provided using a computer and a lockdown browser.

### *5.3 Data Collection Procedures*

The data was collected during the open book assessment and was transferred into a word document for content analysis. Students were given two texts on the advantages and disadvantages of space exploration, which tailed a graphic organizer they had to fill out before the exam. On the exam day, they were given another 700-word text to summarize. Students in part two received a question to which they had to answer using the cause and effect model. The question asked for their opinion, but they were also expected to use texts in this document to support their ideas/opinions. Students had to use at least two examples of textual evidence from the handout readings and include the correct APA in-text citations.

## **6. Data Analysis**

The assessment is designed to measure students' ability to do the critical reading, respond to relevant questions in an essay-type answer using the correct cause and effect structure, find textual evidence to include their response, and use the correct APA citation. All students practiced with their instructor during class sessions to build a cause and effect essay and include textual evidence in their essays.

Table 1 shows the skills that were used to analyze students' writing

Table 1. Analysis of students' writing skills

	Skills
1	Ability to follow instructions
2	Ability to write an introduction, body, and conclusion to the essay properly
3	Ability to write complete sentences without errors
4	Ability to paraphrase without errors
5	Ability to include APA citation
6	Ability to use details/examples to support or illustrate ideas
7	Ability to use wide-range of vocabulary

### *6.1 Quantitative Analysis of the Writing Skills of the Students*

Table 2 below displays the quantitative analysis is on a number of the students' abilities such as Ability to follow instructions, Ability to write an introduction, body, and conclusion to the essay properly, ability to compose complete and meaningful sentences, Ability to write complete sentences without errors, ability to paraphrase without errors, ability to include APA citation, Ability to use details to support ideas and finally, Ability to use a wide range of vocabulary.



Table 2. The quantitative analysis of the writing skills of the students

Skills		N=40		
		Were able	Somehow	Were unable
1	Ability to follow instructions	13 (32.5%)	12 (30%)	15 (37.5%)
2	Ability to write an introduction, body, and conclusion to the essay properly	11 (27.5%)	12 (30%)	17 (42.5%)
3	Ability to write complete sentences without errors	12 (30%)	10 (25%)	18 (45%)
4	Ability to paraphrase without errors	12 (30%)	9 (22.5%)	19 (47.5%)
5	Ability to include APA citation	10 (25%)	14 (35%)	16 (40%)
6	Ability to use details/examples to support or illustrate ideas	19 (47.5%)	12 (30%)	9 (22.5)
7	Ability to use wide-range of vocabulary	10 (25%)	15 (37.5%)	15 (37.5%)

## 6.2 The Qualitative Analysis of the Writing Skills of the Students

### 6.2.1 Ability to Follow Instructions

Following instructions for the particular task was something all students had to do to place themselves on the right track. As explained before, the handout of the open book exam was given two weeks before the assessment. Instructions were provided on the first page, and the instructor is not supposed to explain. Students had to comprehend the text and fill in the diagram to prepare for the questions introduced in the exam. For some, this was their first open-book exam in their entire education journey. For others, since they had a good command of English as they went to Medium English schools, it was their first time; however, they read the instructions and reflected that in their answers. Hence, as shown in table#1, 13 students, i.e., 32.5 % of the total participants, could follow instructions as they answered the prompt that came in the exam as required.

The prompts were not all the same and were distributed randomly. Some were asked to compare and contrast humans and robots being sent to space; others were asked to discuss space exploration's advantages and disadvantages. There was one more prompt regarding

some of the problems with space exploration, through which students were expected to provide some textual evidence from their handouts. Textual evidence was requested in all prompts. The last group of students was asked why humanity is interested in exploring space. So, though all students received the same handouts, they all received different questions. Unfortunately, without reading the prompt, it was found that neglecting the instructions provided in the handouts gave responses that did not correspond to the prompt. 15 students, i.e., 37.5% of the total 40 students, responded with paragraphs prepared ahead of time, and when asked, some responded that they were expecting a different question from the one that came in the test. Some answers covered all aspects mentioned in the booklet; others lacked rationality and discussed the importance of science and exploration. The fear of not doing well in the exam due to the language deficiency urged students to find canned essays or respond without reading the details (See Appendix 1).

According to the response rubric followed to correct this assessment, the student must receive a zero mark for the first category, content, and development.

#### 6.2.2 Ability to Provide Introduction, Body, and Conclusion (Organization)

The rubrics suggest that students must respond fully coherent and logically organized with outstanding cohesion and an effective and varied use of linking words and phrases.

The skill of developing a good organization with an introduction that states the essay's topic sentence, a body that provides major ideas, and a conclusion that summarizes the essay comes among the most critical elements students learn in the Academic Writing Course. It has been repeatedly explained that the organization is the first that instructors examine when evaluating the essay. However, as shown from the table (number) 27 out of 40 students i.e. 67.5% failed to provide proper organization. The majority of students started answering the question without introducing the essay, and 17 i.e. 42.5% discussed irrelevant or broad topics in the introduction. Some wrote about the importance of science to human beings while the question they received in the exam was to compare sending Robots or humans to explore space.

#### 6.2.3 Ability to Write Complete Sentences

Sentence-level errors can lower students' writing scores. It was expected that students who attended ESL classes at high school and passed the grade 12 English exams and EmSAT exams would all aware of these errors and hence avoided them. However, sentence fragment, the run-on sentence, and the comma splice. There are several samples of sentence fragments: lack of a subject, lack of a proper verb, presence of subordinating conjunction (See Appendix 2):

In addition to the fact that the student included irrelevant information, sentence-level errors were also committed. The sentence runs for more than four lines without any punctuation marks, which is the essential element taught to children in most schools in ESL classrooms. Second of all, the sentence is copied from reading comprehension. This is pure plagiarism, and some students are not aware of its risks on their academic status and may be dismissed

because of it

#### 6.2.4 Ability to Paraphrase Without Errors

Students were asked to provide evidence from the text and paraphrase them. This is considered one of the essential skills for college students. However, almost all students had to copy sentences to provide examples, but unfortunately, most failed to provide proper paraphrasing, and when paraphrased, many sentences remained the same without changing them.

#### 6.2.5 Ability to Include APA Citation

Students are expected to integrate textual support fully. The response includes correct in-text citations. However, students would always commit an error here. This could be because they needed more practice, and in high school, this practice was not provided. They took this assessment a few weeks after they joined the college could also contribute to this ability. Some students were never requested in high school to search for references and provide references. Some errors were:

- She mentioned the authors' first name instead of his/her last name (Killer, 2020) whereas it should be (Miller, 2020).
- Not including a year of publication: (Miller) without the year of publication
- Errors with punctuation marks (Miller 2020) or (Miller. 2020) or Miller, 2020 without parentheses.

#### 6.2.6 Ability to Use Details/Examples to Support or Illustrate Ideas

It was found that students were able to provide many examples, though with some errors, and this was one of the right skills almost all students had. It contributes to the fact that students are used to this skill in Arabic, which is their L1 as many studies indicate that students usually are affected by their first language when writing in a foreign language (Cedar, 2004; Chen & Huang, 2003; Collins, 2002; Jarvis, 2000; Jiang, 1995; Lado, 1957; Liu, 1998; Mori, 1998; Yu, 1996).

#### 6.2.7 Ability to Use Wide Range of Vocabulary

Students at this level tend to use the most common words which they acquired their high school. The analysis showed that most used words are the most frequent words students utilize in their daily writing tasks avoiding the usage of words from the advanced academic list.

Students aspire to receive an A but provide an outstanding range of vocabulary with minimal usage errors. However, some new terms were misused by the students, such as using the term radiation was written as "tradition." Moreover, in this way, it can be seen that the writer has written "horizontal" instead of "horizon," and similarly, he has written "rabbit," instead of "robot," and "exploitation" which was supposed to be "exploration." The findings in this

study have suggested some implications which are of significance to EFL teachers and syllabus designers as follows:

## **7. Discussion and Implications**

Texts analysis can provide a better insight into the most common errors students commit. This may lead to further efforts to explore factors that could explain the source of such deficiencies. The fact that students are not exposed to enough writing assignments at school can make one. Therefore, it is highly recommended that students should gradually be exposed to different levels of writing. Literature is not embedded in the EFL curriculum. Intensive reading will help students acquire a wide range of vocabulary. Students are being requested to memorize the meaning of words throughout high school and take multiple quizzes. This is not the proper way to acquire them. Students must continuously observe how native speakers use certain words, and the best presentation of this usage is found in the literature. Reading a novel or parts of novels must be part of EFL classrooms. There are simplified versions of famous novels designed to be taught at elementary and high schools, but from my teaching experience, they are provided in school libraries but are rarely touched. Writing is a skill that is only developed by reading. Students who are rarely requested to read literary work and journals will not thrive in acquiring writing skills. Writing skills like content and development, style, and organization must be introduced in secondary schools and not during college.

This qualitative study, employing content analysis of the essay writing of first-year, female Emirati students at The National University (Fall 2020), revealed significant deficiencies in several key writing skills. The absence of a remedial writing program prior to their composition course, coupled with the observation that many students (70%) originated from government high schools where essay writing may not be extensively practiced, likely contributed to these deficiencies. The data, collected via an open-book assessment incorporating varied prompts (compare/contrast, advantages/disadvantages, problem-solving, opinion with textual support) and a summary task, highlighted consistent weaknesses across several skill areas (see Table 1).

### *7.1 Analysis of Specific Writing Skills*

The quantitative findings (Table 1) indicate substantial challenges in multiple areas. A significant proportion of students struggled to follow instructions (37.5% unable), suggesting difficulties in interpreting and responding appropriately to assessment prompts, a finding was explored in studies highlighting difficulties in understanding task demands in academic settings. One of the previous studies indicated that university students tend to provide pasted answers or plagiarise due to the lack of motivation to read prompts or even think (Gilmore, 2009). Furthermore, a majority (67.5%) failed to structure their essays effectively (introduction, body, conclusion), indicating a lack of foundational organizational skills. This aligns with research emphasizing the importance of explicit instruction in essay structure (Landrieu et al., 2024).

The occurrence of sentence-level errors (45% unable to write error-free sentences) is alarming and points to unsatisfactory grammatical instruction and practice. The high rate of students who are unable to paraphrase accurately (47.5%) and use APA citations correctly (40%) reveals a deficiency in crucial academic skills requiring both textual understanding and adherence to citation conventions (Yang & Sang, 2023). While a relatively higher percentage successfully used details/examples (47.5%), many of these examples needed proper integration and were often copied text. This highlights the significance for instructions of effective paraphrasing and combination of information (Hirvela & Du, 2013). Lastly, students showed limited range of vocabulary use (37.5% unable to demonstrate a wide range) which further restricts the complexity and fluency of their writing, and is consistent with findings that L2 writers often underutilize their vocabulary in academic contexts (Chung & Wan, 2025; Mujtaba et al., 2021; Jarvis, 2020). The example provided exemplifies this—the student writes irrelevant content and reveals poor understanding of the prompt. This indicates issues stemming not only from writing proficiency but also from reading comprehension, suggesting the need for integrated skills development approaches. This takes us to the earlier argument made by Qin and Groombridge (2023) regarding the importance of improving students' reading skills to enhance their writing.

There are many factors behind the deficiency in participants answers. First, the unfamiliar nature of an open-book assessment may have overwhelmed some students. Second, prior experience with essay writing might be a significant cause of success. The analysis highlights the crucial role of experience, particularly practice in essay writing, which was evidently lacking among many participants.

### *7.2 Implications for Curriculum Design*

The findings of this study underscore the urgent need for curriculum reforms that address the identified deficiencies in Emirati students' writing skills. It is essential to implement more comprehensive writing instruction from the secondary school level onward. This can be achieved through integrating varied writing assignments that gradually increase in complexity, allowing students to develop their skills in stages. Moreover, professional development programs for teachers should emphasize the importance of explicit instruction in writing structures, scholarly communication, and proper citation methods, such as APA formatting. Schools should also incorporate practices that promote critical reading and vocabulary acquisition, such as encouraging extensive reading of diverse texts that help students engage with different writing styles and terminologies. Additionally, interventions such as writing support workshops or peer tutoring programs could equip students with the skills needed for effective writing and help instill confidence in their abilities. By fostering a rich writing environment and providing practical support, educational institutions can better prepare Emirati students for the demands of higher education and their future careers, ultimately contributing to a more proficient and capable workforce.

## **8. Conclusion**

These findings suggest several key areas for pedagogical interference. There should be more

incorporated essay writing assignments in the curriculum, which should be varied from the secondary school level onward. Additionally, students should be able to apply different strategies other than the memorization of vocabulary to promote reading comprehension and learn how to utilize vocabulary through extensive engagement with reliable literary texts actively. Furthermore, the educational system should offer more explicit instruction in essay structure, paraphrasing, and APA citation, and all educators should prioritize this. Other researchers could further explore the notion to highlight the effectiveness of various teaching strategies in tackling these specific writing deficits. A good example could be potentially incorporating pre-university writing support programs for students lacking foundational skills.

## References

- Adelman, C. (2006). *The toolbox revisited: Paths to degree completion from high school through college*. U.S. Department of Education.
- Al Kitbi, E. (2006). Gulf state's educational reform's real goals. *Arab Reform Bulletin*, 4(4), 23–24.
- Al Sayegh, F. (2004). Post-9/11 changes in the Gulf: The case of the UAE. *Middle East Policy*, 11(2), 107–124. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1061-1924.2004.00156.x>
- Cedar, P. S. (2004). *Transferability and translatability of idioms by Thai-speaking learners of English* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Boston University.
- CERR. (2017, Month dd). *What does the CEFR have to do with the EmSAT exam?* Bright Learning. <https://www.brightlearning.co/what-does-the-cefr-have-to-do-with-the-emsat-exam/>
- Chen, C. Y., & Huang, H. Y. (2003). L2 acquisition of subject-prominence by EFL students in Taiwan. *English Teaching & Learning*, 27(4), 99–122.
- Chung, E., & Wan, A. (2025). Examining the use of academic vocabulary in first-year ESL undergraduates' writing: A corpus-driven study in Hong Kong. *Assessing Writing*, 63, 100913. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asw.2024.100913>
- Collins, L. (2002). The role of L1 influence and lexical aspect in the acquisition of temporal morphology. *Language Learning*, 52, 43–94. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9922.00177>
- Conley, D. T. (2007). Redefining College Readiness. In Educational Policy Improvement Center. *Educational Policy Improvement Center*.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). Designing and conducting mixed methods research (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Cumming, A., Lai, C., & Cho, H. (2016). Students' writing from sources for academic purposes: A synthesis of recent research. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 23, 47–58. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2016.06.002>



- Dubin, F., & Olshtain, E. (1986). *Course design: Developing programs and materials for language learning*. Cambridge University Press.
- Gallagher, K. (2019). *Education in the United Arab Emirates: Innovation and Transformation* (1st ed.). Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-7736-5>
- Gilmore, B. (2009). *Plagiarism: A how-not-to guide for students*. Heinemann.
- Gobert, M. T. (2019). Transformation in English language education in the UAE. In K. Gallagher (Ed.), *Education in the United Arab Emirates: Innovation and transformation* (pp. 113–126). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-7736-5\\_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-7736-5_7)
- Hirvela, A., & Du, Q. (2013). “Why am I paraphrasing?”: Undergraduate ESL writers’ engagement with source-based academic writing and reading. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 12(2), 87–98. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2012.11.005>
- Hoath, N. (2004, January 22). *Performance of higher colleges under scrutiny*. Gulf News. <https://gulfnews.com/uae/performance-of-higher-colleges-under-scrutiny-1.311569>
- Ibrahim, A., & Alhosani, N. (2020). Impact of language and curriculum on student international exam performances in the United Arab Emirates. *Cogent Education*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2020.1808284>
- Jarvis, S. (2000). Methodological rigor in the study of transfer: Identifying L1 influence in them interlanguage lexicon. *Language Learning*, 50(2), 245–309. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0023-8333.00118>
- Kharma, N. (1998). EFL and community needs. *International Review of Applied Linguistics*, 36(1), 49–67.
- Landrieu, Y., De Smedt, F., Van Keer, H., & De Wever, B. (2024). Argumentation in collaboration: The impact of explicit instruction and collaborative writing on secondary school students’ argumentative writing. *Reading & Writing*, 37(6), 1407–1434. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-023-10439-x>
- Li, J. (2021). Examining EFL learners’ source text use in summary writing. *Language Teaching Research*, 29(1), 150–173. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13621688211055887>
- Marzec-Stawiarska, M. (2016). The influence of summary writing on the development of reading skills in a foreign language. *System*, 59, 90–99. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2016.04.006>
- Mujtaba, S. M., Kamyabi Gol, A., & Parkash, R. (2021). A study on the relationship between language aptitude, vocabulary size, working memory, and L2 writing accuracy. *Foreign Language Annals*, 54(4), 1059–1081. <https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12584>
- Nazzal, N. (2018, September 15). *Emiratis continue choosing private schools over public schools*. Gulf News. <https://gulfnews.com/news/uae/education/emiratis-continue-choosingprivate-schools-over-pu>



blic-schools-1.1312894

Null, W. (2016). *Curriculum: From theory to practice* (2nd ed.). Roman & Littlefield.

Perna, L. W., & Titus, A. (2005). The relationship between parental involvement as social capital and college enrollment: An examination of racial/ethnic group differences. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 76(5), 485–518. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2005.11772296>

Qin, J., & Groombridge, T. (2023). Deconstructing summary writing: Further exploration of L2 reading and writing. *SAGE Open*, 13(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440231200935>

Salem, O., & Swan, M. (2014, February 4). *Foundation year at UAE state universities to be scrapped in 2018*. The National. <https://shorturl.at/kcFeN>

Stander, M. (2020). Strategies to help university students avoid plagiarism: a focus on translation as an intervention strategy. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 44(2), 156–169. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2018.1526260>

Swan, K. (2015). Technology Transience and Distance Education in the Second Machine Age. *Quarterly Review of Distance Education*, 16(2), 139-.

Tanner, D., & Tanner, L. (1980). *Curriculum development: Theory into practice*. Merrill.

Wachs, T. D. (1993). The nature–nurture gap: What we have here is a failure to collaborate. In R. Plomin & G. E. McClearn (Eds.), *Nature, nurture & psychology* (pp. 375–391). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/10131-019>

Yang, R. Y., & Sang, Y. R. (2023). Concept-based language instruction and the teaching of citation in English academic writing. *The Modern Language Journal*, 107(S1), 46–67. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12822>

Yasuda, S. (2015). Exploring changes in FL writers' meaning-making choices in summary writing: A systemic functional approach. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 27, 105–121. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2014.09.008>

## Glossary

**Academic Integrity:** The ethical code of academia, emphasizing honesty and responsibility in scholarship. It includes proper citation practices and avoidance of plagiarism.

**APA (American Psychological Association):** A citation style commonly used in social sciences that outlines specific guidelines for referencing sources in academic writing.

**Content Analysis:** A qualitative research method used to interpret textual material through systematic coding and categorization.

**EFL (English as a Foreign Language):** The teaching and learning of English in contexts where it is not the primary language spoken.

**First Language (L1):** The native language that a person has learned from birth, often influencing their second language acquisition.

**Second Language (L2):** Any language learned after the first language, often used to refer to languages learned in an educational context, such as English for non-native speakers.

**Literacy Skills:** The abilities required to read, write, and communicate effectively in a given language, which are essential for academic success.

**Proficiency Level:** A measurement of a student's ability to use a language effectively, often assessed through standardized tests.

**Remedial Programs:** Academic courses designed to help students who are not meeting the expected standards in a particular skill area, providing additional support to improve deficiencies.

**Summarization:** The process of condensing a text into a shorter version while preserving its main ideas and essential details.

**Textual Evidence:** Information or data drawn from a text used to support an argument or analysis in academic writing.

**Writing Proficiency:** The level of skill and effectiveness that a student demonstrates in writing, including organization, grammar, style, and clarity.

**Open-Book Assessment:** An evaluation format that allows students to refer to their notes or other resources while completing the exam, aimed at promoting understanding over memorization.

**Varying Perspectives:** Different viewpoints or interpretations regarding a particular topic, reflecting the complexity of issues such as writing instruction and assessment.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Here is One Example of a Non-Corresponding Answer**

Writing Question: What would be some of the problems with space exploration?

Given Answer:

“People usually link aging to being sick, lonely, and purposeless. However, does that have to be true? To prevent degenerative disease is by exercise, a healthy diet, and emotional well-being; people are treated horribly when they are too old as if they are a burden or too weak. According to Dr. Christian Northrup, she has written many books about aging gracefully and menopause to debunk the old myths. Mainly people age horribly as a result of poor habits and negligence. When people age, they are treated poorly because they think they are too weak and purposeless to work. Women are differently treated once they lose their beauty and desire. Society and the markets project a picture of how disgusting it can look for someone to age and use it to promote their business. Aging is not wrong. People are not going

to live until 40 forever. A career is an essential view of life, but it is not our last resort. I think our life is set out for us by our own decisions, and it is not for anyone to decide how a person should live whatsoever. Let alone try to destroy your ambitions and what you desire. In conclusion, we need to find our purpose and live our lives as we want, and we should not be afraid of aging and be proud of all the wrinkles. enjoy the beauty of life and live to the max".Please add your survey questions /questionnaire /research instrument here.

## **Appendix 2**

*"Some of the problems with space exploration are global and launch accidents. They postponed the mission from April to September 2019 because of a launch accident in October. The astronaut's safety is so important even though the launch accident happened, they are still glad and look forward to doing it in September, and for there safety Al shaibani said one of the astronauts will fly to the ISS on Wednesday 25 September 2019, for an eight-day in Russian space mission aboard a spacecraft and will travel back aboard a Soyuz-MS 12."*

## **Copyrights**

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)